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JESUS, SOCRATES, AND THE STATE: POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY AND POWER

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Christopher J. Tranchetti

November 2011

Advisor: Alan Gilbert

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Abstract

Joseph Campbell, a preeminent scholar of world mythology, wrote often regarding the “power of myth” in our society. Myth, which serves as a metaphor to explain the world and ourselves to ourselves, can be used to further the greater good of mankind. It can also be used to inflict great harm and hardship. Myth serves as either elixir or poison depending not upon he who consumes it, but upon he who conjures it. In this essay, we will look at the lives, work and myths of two historic figures who desired nothing less than the greater glory of God and man, namely, Jesus and Socrates. We will explore the creation of the myths surrounding Socrates and Jesus as heroes (in Campbell’s sense of the *monomyth*) and the gifts which each gives to the world (i.e. their consonant messages of egalitarian rule, equality of the sexes, living a good life and nonviolent civil disobedience).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

To one who said that myths were lies and therefore worthless, even though
'breathed through silver.'

—J.R.R. Tolkien, dedication of *Mythopoeia*

Joseph Campbell tells us that “mythologies serve to validate the customs, systems of sentiments, and political aims of their respective local groups” (Campbell 1976, 95). Additionally, myths should not be portrayed and understood as a rendition of historical facts, but rather as “poetic readings of the mystery of life from a certain interested point of view” (Campbell 1976, 95). However, the former statement is open to contention. Campbell, too, recognizes this potential for dispute by delineating two types of mythology:

namely, one (of which the biblical myths are the best-known examples) where all stress is placed on the historicity of the episodes, and the other (of which Indian mythology is an instance) where the episodes are *meant* to be read symbolically, as pointing through and beyond themselves. (Campbell 1976, 139-140)

Our concern will be the latter type of mythology which, through its symbolic reading of myth, will reveal universal themes and lessons applicable to all mankind. “For the function of such myth-building is to interpret the sense, not to chronicle the facts, of a life, and to offer the artwork of the legend, then as an activating symbol for the inspiration and shaping of lives, and even civilizations, to come” (Campbell 1976, 347).

The mythology of the West, Campbell’s Occident, involves

the interplay of two contrary pieties: the first type of piety we term religious and recognize in all traditions of the Levant: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The other we term, in the broadest sense, humanistic, and recognize in the native mythologies of Europe: the Greek, Roman, Celtic, and Germanic. (Campbell 1976, 4)

In point of fact, he attributes the “complexity and vitality” of our “Occidental heritage” to the mutual acceptance of the *Word of God* and the *rational individual* despite their mutual exclusivity (Campbell 1976, 5). The most obvious embodiments of these two contrary pieties are Jesus of Nazareth (representing the religious) and Socrates (manifesting the humanistic). Although much has been written about these two men individually, the few works in which they have appeared together seemed to engage in a compare-and-contrast presentation through which one or the other has “come out on top” depending upon the spiritual beliefs or political bent of the author, for example, Joseph Priestley’s *Socrates and Jesus Compared* and, more subtly, Peter Kreeft’s *Socrates Meets Jesus: History’s Greatest Questioner Confronts the Claims of Christ*.

But, are the mythologies, the pieties, and the messages of Jesus and Socrates really all that far apart? Are they, truly, mutually exclusive? This work, while comparative in nature, will endeavor to wield an even hand towards both Socrates and Jesus with the purpose of portraying each as an archetypal hero of Occidental mythology. Therefore, rather than providing an explication of contrasting teachings, we will explore those areas in which the lives and didacticisms of our heroes conflate. The lens through which we will focus our argument is that of Campbell’s adventure of the hero and the *monomyth* (Campbell 1973, 30). We will discuss the *boons* won by our heroes and bestowed freely upon humanity for all to enjoy. We will also find that while the most

highly-prized and sought-after boon, that of eternal life, is enjoyed by our heroes, we need not wait for our own time of crossing the threshold in order to relish the “lesser” boons more unceremoniously given. Namely, those things most valued by lovers of wisdom while still here on earth: egalitarianism, equality of the sexes, living a good life, and nonviolent resistance to tyranny. Finally, throughout our quest, we will remain cognizant of the common mythological symbols used to either further the legitimacy of our heroes or to aid in elucidating their message. These symbols will include, but are not limited to: common birth, noble death, caves, cups, sacrificial offerings and resurrection.

The term *monomyth*, borrowed from James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce 1999, 581), is used by Campbell to summarize the journey of the archetypal mythological hero as follows: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell 1973, 30). While Campbell traces the hero’s adventure across a myriad of times and cultures,

whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic lands of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit above described: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return. (Campbell 1973, 35)

(In order to gain a better understanding of the hero-cycle, a visual representation of it has been reproduced in Figure 1. (Campbell 1973, 245))

However, Campbell is also careful to note that any given hero’s mythology is not a carbon copy of those that have gone before him. Rather, it is subject to local and

cultural influences whereby certain aspects of the cycle may be embellished while others are missing altogether.

Many tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle ..., others string a number of independent cycles into a single series (as in the *Odyssey*). Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes (Campbell 1973, 246).

Campbell's use of the word *fuse* in describing elements of myth is not accidental. He, like the historian Robin Lane Fox, is an outspoken proponent of the occurrence of syncretism in myth over time. During the Hellenistic period (331 BC – 324 AD), Campbell credits Alexander the Great for having “had brought together in one world Greece, India, Persia, Egypt, and even the Jews outside of Jerusalem, [which resulted in] Greek religion advanc[ing] to a new phase: on one hand, of grandiose universalism, and on the other, of personal, inward immediacy” (Campbell 1976, 238). Further,

nowhere before the period of Alexander the Great does the idea seem to have emerged — or, at least, to have been put into operation — of a transcultural syncretism, systematically cultivated. We may see in this an extension of the Greek regard for the individual beyond the bounds of Greece itself, as well as an application of the idea of an empire not of tyranny but of free men to the sphere of thought. For in this period the Periclean ideal of the polis expanded to the Alexandrian idea of the cosmopolis. (Campbell 1976, 240)

This relationship between the universal and the individual provides a convenient segue for a discussion of the archetypal hero of myth.

By definition, Campbell's archetypal hero is

the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought.” (Campbell 1973, 19-20)

Further, while “the passage of the mythological hero may be over ground, incidentally; fundamentally, it is inward — into depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost, forgotten powers are revived, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world” (Campbell 1973, 29). Since the archetypal hero is not limited by history, he is, in effect, outside of history, and thereby, timeless, eternal, and, hence, universal.

Additionally, because the hero’s most significant battles occur within him, the individual human will and *arête* play a pivotal role in his ability to successfully attain the boon.

Hence, the universality of the hero’s story and message is made credible and imbued with longevity precisely because the syncretization of it has sufficed to maintain its relevancy in every age by conveying both societal and personal resonance over time.

CHAPTER TWO: CREATING THE MYTH

Man, Sub-creator, the refracted light
through whom is splintered from a single White
to many hues, and endlessly combined
in living shapes that move from mind to mind.

—J.R.R. Tolkien, from *Mythopoeia*

We noted in the Introduction that the mythological hero transcends historical limitations, but as in the case of Jesus and Socrates, he may also live within history. Thus, from the very beginning, our hero must exist both within and without history. This can be most effectively accomplished within the hero's story by establishing his divine bloodline while simultaneously recognizing his immediate human family. Note that we are already merging the two pieties, religious and humanistic, in our discussion of the archetypal hero.

Jesus and Socrates were the sons of *demiurges*. This word is particularly apropos because of its dual meaning. In a pedestrian sense, it can be used to describe craftsmen, the human fathers of both men, while, in a divine sense, *Demiurge* refers to the god/God who created the universe. It is commonly accepted that Socrates was the son of a stone mason (Laertius *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.5.1). However, in a historical sense, we do not know that this was true. From *Alcibiades*, we know that Socrates was the son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete (Plato *Alcibiades* 131e). We also know that Socrates states that his lineage “goes back to Daedalus” (Plato *Alcibiades* 121a), a claim he makes not only in *Alcibiades* but also in *Euthyphro*, “Your statements,

Euthyphro, seem to belong to my ancestor, Daedalus” (Plato *Euthyphro* 11c). This affiliation with Daedalus follows common cultural practices of the time, namely, occupations associating themselves with a patron god or mythological figure (i.e. that of sculptors with Daedalus) and extrapolating their personal ancestry to that of their patron (Hutchinson 1997, 578n16). Therefore, it is through the use of this custom and the former quotations from two Platonic works that Sophroniscus was believed to have been a sculptor or stone cutter. Interestingly, however, Daedalus was not a craftsman who fashioned stone, but rather “was the first person who worked in wood; it was he who invented the saw, the axe, the plummet, the gimlet, glue, and isinglass” (Pliny the Elder *The Natural History* 7:57). One may then say that, in effect, Daedalus was a carpenter.

How serendipitous is it for our purposes that Socrates traces his lineage not only to an artisan, in general, but also, to a carpenter, in particular! As we know, Jesus was the son of Joseph a fact supported by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke: “Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born” (Matthew 1:16 [Revised Standard Version]); “And Joseph also went up from Galilee ... to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who was with child” (Luke 2:4-5); and “Is not this [Jesus] Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22). Joseph’s occupation was that of a carpenter as evidenced by the quote from Matthew, “Is not this [Jesus] the carpenter’s son?” (Matthew 13:55), and similarly in Mark, “Is not this [Jesus] the carpenter, the son of Mary...” (Mark 6:3). Further, in the New Testament apocrypha, *The History of Joseph the Carpenter*, “He [Joseph] was, besides, skilful in his trade, which was that of a carpenter” (*History of Joseph* 2). Note that in the quote from Mark, it is Jesus who is referred to as being the carpenter. However, there is an assumed

customary association that the son follows in the footsteps of the father thereby granting Joseph the status of carpenter, too. Hence, we see not only the similarity of an artisan lineage between Jesus and Socrates, but also the common cultural association of an occupation being handed down from one generation to the next. The salient point to be grasped is not that both men were the sons of artisans or craftsmen, but rather, that in the cultures of each, craftsmen were common working class people. They were neither wealthy nor politically powerful. How, then, could they be heroes? More importantly, why should we (or the people of their time) listen to anything they have to say? As the Nazarenes who rejected Jesus asked, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” (Matthew 13:54).

The answer is provided by Campbell.

The makers of legend have seldom rested content to regard the world’s greatest heroes as mere human beings who broke past the horizons that limited their fellows and returned with such boons as any man with equal faith and courage might have found. On the contrary, the tendency has always been to endow the hero with extraordinary powers from the moment of birth, or even the moment of conception. (Campbell 1973, 319)

Specifically, for our heroes, Jesus and Socrates, we must now explore the second meaning of *demiurge* for it is through their divine lineage that each derives their legitimacy as a mythological hero and, subsequently, their credibility to be a deliverer of the boon. As previously mentioned, the divine sense of the word *demiurge* refers to the god/God who created the universe. We find evidence of this in Plato’s *Timaeus* where *demiourgos* is translated as “maker” (Zeyl 1997, 1234n9), “Now to find the maker and father of this universe” (Plato *Timaeus* 28c) and “O gods, works divine whose maker and father I am” (Plato *Timaeus* 41a). So, too, the God of the Old Testament is a

Demiourgos, a craftsman or creator, as described in the book of Genesis: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1); and “In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” (Genesis 2:4). Therefore, by using the secondary, divine, meaning of *demiurge* when discussing the lineage of our heroes, we are alluding to the possibility that both men have fathers of supernatural origin.

In *Alcibiades*, Socrates traces his lineage to Zeus, “mine [my family] goes back to Daedalus and Daedalus’ goes back to Hephaestus, son of Zeus” (Plato *Alcibiades* 121a). In Greek mythology, Zeus is the father of the gods. In *Timaeus*, Plato traces the lineage of Zeus back to the *demiurge*:

The Earth he [the *demiurge*] devised to be our nurturer... Earth and Heaven gave birth to Ocean and Tethys, who in turn gave birth to Phorcys, Cronus and Rhea and all the gods in that generation. Cronus and Rhea gave birth to Zeus and Hera, as well as all those siblings who are called by names we know. (Plato *Timaeus* 40b & e, 41a)

In Matthew’s Gospel, the lineage of Jesus is traced back to the house of David through his human father Joseph. Chapter 1 begins with, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1), and consequently, ends with:

... and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. (Matthew 1:16-17)

Christians believe that the birth of Jesus fulfilled God’s promise to David of a messiah to “raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Samuel 7:12) such that “your house and your kingdom shall be

made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:16). Therefore, the messianic prophecy of Nathan in the Second Book of Samuel serves to link Jesus’ human ancestry with his divine lineage. Matthew makes it more explicit through his telling of Jesus’ divine birth. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18). In addition, Matthew contends that through the birth of Jesus, God fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah, “All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us)” (Matthew 1:22-23).

Our heroes themselves also aid in establishing and confirming their relationship with the divine. As previously noted, Socrates is quoted as tracing his genealogy to the mythic Daedalus, Hephaestus, and Zeus. In addition, during his defense in the *Apology*, Socrates believes himself to be a gift from the god: “I am far from making a defense now on my own behalf ... but on yours, to prevent you from wrongdoing by mistreating the god’s gift to you by condemning me” (Plato *Apology* 30d-e). For Socrates, this relationship with the divine did not begin as an adult. “I [Socrates] have a divine or spiritual sign which ... began when I was a child” (Plato *Apology* 31d). In the case of Jesus, Simon Peter tells Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), “Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven’” (Matthew 16:17). Thus, Jesus too believes himself to be directly related to God. Similarly, for Jesus, this belief did not

arise in him as an adult, but was with him from early childhood. Luke supports this notion by describing an exchange between Mary and a twelve year-old Jesus when after a three-day search, she finds him in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus responds to his mother, “‘How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them” (Luke 2:49-50).

Having established the credibility of our heroes, we will now enter the first stage of the monomyth, that of *separation*. During the separation stage, our hero will be separated from the world and will experience a *call to adventure*. While in many myths this separation from the world is represented as a physical one (i.e. entering the fairy tale forest), for our heroes it is an inward call to live and act differently than those around them. “It may sound the call to some historical undertaking. Or it may mark the dawn of religious illumination. ... [In either case], the familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand” (Campbell 1973, 51). The call may come from a herald. It may come in the form of a miracle.

In the story of Jesus, the call comes at the beginning of his public ministry and is comprised of both a herald and a miracle. John the Baptist foreshadows Jesus when he says, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:7-8). Such is Jesus’ call from his herald, John the Baptist. However, it continues with a miracle. For as John baptized Jesus in the waters of the Jordan, “when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and

the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10-11). While Mark uses a simile to describe Jesus’ awakening by the Holy Spirit, Luke uses a metaphor, “when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Luke 3:21-22).

In the case of Socrates, the call was more akin to an internal awakening of self. However, we may consider the part of the herald to be played by Chaerephon and the miracle to be present through the Delphic oracle. As Plato’s Socrates tells us, “He [Chaerephon] went to Delphi at one time and ventured to ask the oracle ... he asked if any man was wiser than I, and the Pythian replied that no one was wiser” (Plato *Apology* 21a). Xenophon’s account substitutes the priestess, Pythian, with the direct voice of the god Apollo: “when Chaerephon asked in Delphi about me [Socrates] in the presence of many, Apollo responded that no human being was more free, more just, or more moderate than I” (Xenophon *Apology* 14). When Socrates was informed of the oracle’s response, he questioned it. “When I heard of this reply I asked myself: ‘Whatever does the god mean? What is his riddle?’ ... For a long time I was at a loss as to his meaning; then I very reluctantly turned to some such investigation as this” (Plato *Apology* 21b). His investigation consisted of questioning those he believed to be wiser than himself in an effort to refute the oracle. Hence, Socrates’ public ministry took the form of questioning and using what is now called the “Socratic method” of dialectic and critical thinking. “So even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me — and I go

around seeking out anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise” (Plato *Apology* 23b).

In the myths of the archetypal heroes, there are times when one of them may refuse the *call to adventure*. This refusal usually occurs because the individual wishes to pursue his own self interest, but, in the end, does so to his detriment (Campbell 1973, 59). Notably, neither Jesus nor Socrates fails to pick up the yoke laid before each of them. For instance, just prior to his arrest and subsequent crucifixion, Jesus went with his disciples to Gethsemane and separating himself from them slightly, he began to pray. “He fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this chalice from me; yet not what I will, but what you will’” (Mark 14:35-36). Socrates, for his part, despite wanting to refute the oracle, did not refuse it. Through his questioning of others he thought to be wiser he realized, “I am wiser than this man ... he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know...” (Plato *Apology* 21d). Further, after beginning the work of the god, Socrates eventually came to embrace it. “After that I proceeded systematically. I realized, to my sorrow and alarm, that I was getting unpopular, but I thought that I must attach the greatest importance to the god’s oracle, so I must go to all those who had any reputation for knowledge to examine its meaning” (Plato *Apology* 21e).

Having accepted the call, both men lived the call as teachers, thereby initiating the process of setting themselves apart from the world at-large. Socrates taught, or rather,

engaged in conversations (Plato *Apology* 19c & 28a) publicly and privately, “both in his workshop and in the marketplace” (Laertius *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.5.6), as well as in the homes of those who followed him. For example, Socrates’ conversation in the *Republic* occurs in Polemarchus’ house (Plato *Republic* 328b). I understand that Socrates would disagree vehemently with my characterization of him as a teacher, as he expresses in Plato’s *Apology*, “And, if you have heard from anyone that I undertake to teach people and charge a fee for it, that is not true either” (Plato *Apology* 19d). However, in his remarks, Socrates was referring to the Sophists, whom he held in disdain. To be clear, I am not equating Socrates with the Sophists, but it is hard not to deny the fact that those who have heard him speak have learned from the experience. For instance, Euthyphro laments the inadequacy of his arguments after placing them before Socrates.

I have no way of telling you what I have in mind, for whatever proposition we put forward goes around and refuses to stay put where we establish it. ... I am not the one who makes them go round and not remain in the same place; it is you who are the Daedalus; for as far as I am concerned they would remain as they were. (Plato *Euthyphro* 11b & d)

Further, Alcibiades testifies to the power of Socrates words. “I have heard Pericles and many other great orators, and I have admired their speeches. But nothing like this ever happened to me: they never upset me so deeply that my very own soul starting protesting...” (Plato *Symposium* 215e). Suffice it to say that Socrates educates by “coming to the assistance of the god” (Plato *Apology* 23b) to prove to those who think they are wise that they are not.

In addition, he educates through the awakening of a person's recollection as occurred with the slave in *Meno*.

As the soul is immortal, has been born often, and has seen all things ... nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only— a process men call learning— [from] discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning, as a whole, are recollection. (Plato *Meno* 81c&d)

Socrates then successfully assists one of Meno's slaves with a geometric proof even though the slave has never before been taught geometry. As a result, Socrates concludes, "he will know it without having been taught but only questioned, and find the knowledge within himself. ... And is not finding knowledge within oneself recollection?" (Plato *Meno* 85d).

In the case of Jesus, his disciples often addressed him as *rabbi* (teacher of the Jewish law) or teacher. For example, in Mark 5:35-36, "'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?'" But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue..." and also in Mark 9:5, "And Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is well that we are here...'" As Jesus "went about among the villages teaching" (Mark 6:6), the locale for his lessons were comprised of public places, such as the synagogue, as well as private places, such as the homes of his disciples. For instance, he taught at a synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21), from a boat on the sea beside the land (Mark 4:1), and from the house of Simon the leper (Mark 14:3). Just as Socrates made the arguments of Euthyphro "get up and walk away," so, too, did Jesus' ability to teach inspire awe among those who experienced it. "They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he

taught them as one who had authority, not as the scribes” (Mark 1:21-22). Mark also describes when Jesus went to Nazareth, “And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him?’” (Mark 6:2). Jesus’ parallel to Socrates’ recollected knowledge through searching and learning can be found in Luke, “And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9).

Neither of these men gained materially from their public ministry and both were, by all accounts, actually impoverished. This fact in itself, also, supports their propensity toward otherworldliness and the separation experienced by the archetypal hero. At his trial, Socrates states, “Because of this occupation, I do not have the leisure to engage in public affairs to any extent, nor indeed to look after my own, but I live in great poverty because of my service to the god” (Plato *Apology* 23b). He further elucidates the unusualness of this state of being,

the fact that it does not seem like human nature for me to have neglected all my own affairs and to have tolerated this neglect now for so many years while I was always concerned with you ... to persuade you to care for virtue. ... I have [n]ever received a fee [n]or ever asked for one. I ... have a convincing witness that I speak the truth, my poverty.” (Plato *Apology* 31b & c)

In Xenophon’s *Apology*, Socrates states, “And while others procure delights from the marketplace at great cost, I contrive, without expense, delights from the soul more pleasant than those” (Xenophon *Apology* 18). Aristodemus attests to Socrates’ impoverished condition when he relays to Apollodorus, “one day he ran into Socrates, who had just bathed and put on his fancy sandals — both very unusual events” (Plato

Symposium 174a). The comments of Alcibiades further support Socrates' lack of material goods. "Socrates went out in that weather [the cold] wearing nothing but this same old light cloak, and even in bare feet" (Plato *Symposium* 220b).

Similarly, Jesus speaks to a would-be follower about the hardship involved in being his disciple. "And a scribe came up and said to him, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head'" (Matthew 8:19-20). Thus, from Matthew we learn that Jesus had no permanent home as an adult during his public ministry, and tradition extrapolates that to mean that Jesus also had no visible means of support. Luke tells us that Jesus and the Apostles received material support from numerous benefactors. "Mary, called Magdalene ... and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their means" (Luke 8:2-3). Jesus again alludes to the burden of discipleship when he tells his disciples that they must deny their own personal needs and comforts in order to be effective followers. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). Jesus put these words into practice when he sent the Apostles out to preach. "And he said to them, 'Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart'" (Luke 9:3-4). Finally, in John's Gospel, we learn that Judas "had the money box" (John 13:29), presumably the common funds of Jesus (the itinerant preacher) and his twelve Apostles who lived and

worked together in common. This practice continued among Jesus' disciples even after his death, as Luke describes, "And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

Thus, we see that by placing less importance on physical needs and worldly things, our heroes exist not only within and without history (as discussed in the introduction), but also straddle two planes of existence, namely the material and ethereal realms. Campbell notes that it is because of this unique position held by the archetypal hero that he is given supernatural aid. "For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure..." (Campbell 1973, 69). "The higher mythologies develop the role in the great figure of the guide, the teacher..." (Campbell 1973, 72). Hence, our heroes, who are teachers in the material world, are granted teachers of their own, albeit spiritual ones, to guide and protect them in their quest. For Jesus, the protector is none other than God himself. We have already discussed the voice from the heavens which declared its pleasure with Jesus at his baptism by John (see Mark 1:11). We again, hear the voice of God at Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain top.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. ... And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, 'This is my beloved son; listen to him.'" (Mark 9:2-3 & 7)

Jesus also acknowledges that all of his earthly power was granted to him by God. "All things have been delivered to me by my Father" (Luke 10:11). Further, during his time

of need while at Gethsemane, just prior to being arrested, Jesus prays for God's help and acknowledges his protective power. "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this chalice from me; yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43).

Socrates' protective figure is that of his personal daemon. "I [Socrates] have a divine or spiritual sign which Meletus has ridiculed in his deposition. This began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything" (Plato *Apology* 31d).

Xenophon's Socrates describes it as follows: "But doubtless both that the god foreknows what will be and that he forewarns whom he wishes ... Yet, whereas others name what forewarns them 'birds' and 'sayings,' and 'signs' and 'prophets,' I call this a "*daimonion*" and I think that in naming it thus I speak both more truthfully and more piously..." (Xenophon *Apology* 13). At his trial, Socrates notes that his daemon was silent during his speech, and accepts this as proof that he has taken the right course of action in defending himself and accepting the subsequent verdict of the jury. "At all previous times my familiar prophetic power, my spiritual manifestation, frequently opposed me, even in small matters, when I was about to do something wrong ... for it is impossible that my familiar sign did not oppose me if I was not about to do what was right" (Plato *Apology* 40a & c).

Having accepted their call to adventure and having become acquainted with their protectors, Jesus and Socrates are confronted with trials or tests as they prepare to *cross the threshold* as part of the hero's journey. While Campbell has the crossing of the

threshold coming before the trials (see Figure 1), I don't believe that this causes any inconsistency with the monomyth. As he states, "If one or another of the basic elements of the archetypal pattern is omitted from a given fairy tale, legend, ritual, or myth, it is bound to be somehow or other implied – and the omission itself can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example..." (Campbell 1973, 38). Similarly, I apply this latitude to the order of the minor sub-components of the monomyth. The hero's trials are the beginning of the second phase of the hero-cycle, that of *initiation*, and usually consist of successive tests. In many cases, he receives assistance from his supernatural guide that provides him with the strength, fortitude, or other virtues necessary to survive the ordeal. The purpose of the initiation rites are "the 'purification of self,' [such that] when the senses are 'cleansed and humbled,' ... the energies and interests [can be] 'concentrated upon transcendental things'" (Campbell 1973, 101).

Jesus' trials began with his three temptations by Satan in the desert.

Then Jesus was lead by the Spirit [God, the Holy Spirit, his guide] into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted for forty days and nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:1-4)

Satan appeared to Jesus two more times during his desert trials tempting him to stray from the Way. During the second trial, Satan wanted Jesus to use his God-given power to save himself from death.

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" (Matthew 4:5-7)

For the third trial, Satan offered Jesus worldly power if he agreed to worship Satan over God. “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me’” (Matthew 4:8-9). Yet, again, Jesus rebuffed him. “Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came [more protectors] and ministered to him” (Matthew 4:11). Through this first set of trials, Jesus, being led by the Spirit (his protector and guide), overcame or controlled physical desires (hunger), displayed spiritual purity (trust in God), and dispelled his ego (decline of earthly power). Thus, we see that in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus’ public ministry only begins after his successful completion of the initiation rites, a period of self purification represented by the temptations in the desert. “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee ... And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all” (Luke 4:14-15).

However, these were not the only trials that Jesus was to endure. After he was arrested by the chief priests and the temple guards, Jesus’ trials began anew. This set of trials was more tangible in nature than the spiritual trials of the desert, and Jesus had to endure physical pain and humiliation inflicted upon him by others. Before the council of chief priests and elders, he was questioned. Once he was condemned by them for blasphemy, “some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’ And the guards received him with blows” (Mark 14:65). To this scene, Luke adds, “And they spoke many other words against him, reviling him” (Luke 22:65). After this condemnation, “they [the priests, scribes and elders] bound him and led him away and delivered him to Pilate the [Roman] governor” (Matthew 27:2). Pilate had

Jesus scourged, that is to say, whipped with a device similar to a cat-o'-nine-tails (see Mark 15:15 and Matthew 27:26). As the soldiers led him to be crucified, he was stripped of his clothes, crowned with a plait of thorns, mocked, and spat upon (Mark 15:16-19). His final trial was that of his crucifixion. Jesus suffered the penalty of death given to criminals in the Roman Empire by being nailed to a wooden cross. As Mark relays, "And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left" (Mark 15:27). Luke's Gospel concurs with Mark, "Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals" (Luke 23:32-33). At the conclusion of this final trial, "Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last" (Luke 23:46). It is at this moment that Jesus *crossed the threshold*. But, we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Socrates' heroic trials also contained physical and spiritual elements. In Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades praises Socrates for the physical suffering that he had endured while serving as a foot soldier of Athens. "When Athens invaded Potidaea ... he took the hardships of the campaign much better than I ever did" (Plato *Symposium* 219e). "No one else stood up to hunger as well as he did. ... he could drink the best of us under the table. Still, and most amazingly, no one ever saw him drunk. ... Add to this his amazing resistance to the cold..." (Plato *Symposium* 220a-b). Socrates continued to display a mastery over the physical limitations of the body when "he started thinking about some problem or other; he just stood outside, trying to figure it out. He couldn't resolve it, but he wouldn't give up. He simply stood there, glued to the same spot. By midday, many

soldiers had seen him ... he stood on the very same spot until dawn!” (Plato *Symposium* 220c-d). Socrates also passed the physical and mental trials associated with battle.

The army had already dispersed in all directions, and Socrates was retreating together with Laches. ... Well, it was easy to see that he was remarkably more collected than Laches. ... He was observing everything quite calmly, looking out for friendly troops and keeping an eye on the enemy. ... this was a very brave man. (Plato *Symposium* 221a-b)

This bravery of which Alcibiades speaks also manifests itself in Socrates’ absence of mortal fear. When Alcibiades is wounded in battle, it is Socrates who, in complete disregard for his own safety, saves not only Alcibiades, but also his armor (see Plato *Symposium* 220e). The import of the trial of mortal fear may be further explained by Jesus’ words, “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Or further by Xenophon’s Socrates, “not only human beings but gods and heroes as well value more the friendship of the soul than the use of the body” (Xenophon *Symposium* 8:28).

Like Jesus, Socrates faces his final physical trial at the time of his execution. Socrates was tried and convicted of impiety in the *Apology*. After his conviction, Meletus asks that the death penalty be imposed (see Plato *Apology* 36a-b). Before the jury, Socrates speaks to each of the potential penalties – death, fine, exile, shutting up (i.e. ceasing to engage in philosophy) – as well as the merits and pitfalls of each as it pertains to his case. The jury’s verdict is death. But rather than emotionally break down in the face of now certain death, Socrates remains unmoved.

I was convicted because I lacked not words but boldness and shamelessness and the willingness to say to you what you would most gladly have heard from me, lamentations and tears and my saying and doing things that are unworthy of me

but that you are accustomed to hear from others. ... I would much rather die after this kind of defense than live after making the other kind. (Plato *Apology* 38d-e)

How does this exemplify Socrates' passing of a trial? Let's let the words which Plato provides him answer that.

At all previous times my familiar prophetic power, my spiritual manifestation, frequently opposed me, even in small matters, when I was about to do something wrong, but now that, as you can see for yourselves, I was faced with what one might think, and what is generally thought to be, the worst of evils, my divine sign has not opposed me, either when I left home at dawn, or when I came into court, or at any time that I was about to say something during my speech. (Plato *Apology* 40a-b)

In contradiction to the belief that death is evil, Socrates offers as his proof, "it is impossible that my familiar sign did not oppose me if I was not about to do what was right" (Plato *Apology* 40c).

Unlike Jesus, Socrates' spiritual trials occur at the conclusion of his public ministry. However, they still center on faith in the god and convey the attainment of spiritual purity. As Socrates discusses in *Phaedo*, "does purification not ... separate the soul as far as possible from the body and accustom it to gather itself and collect itself out of every part of the body and to dwell by itself as far as it can both now and in the future, freed, as it were, from the bonds of the body?" (Plato *Phaedo* 67c-d). Further, "in truth, moderation and courage and justice are a purging away of all such things, and wisdom itself is a kind of cleansing or purification" (Plato *Phaedo* 69b). With regards to an afterlife, Socrates declares, "In fact, Simmias, ... those who practice philosophy in the right way are in training for dying and they fear death least of all men" (Plato *Phaedo* 67e). "I am likely to be right to leave you and my masters here without resentment or complaint, believing that there, as here, I shall find good masters and good friends" (Plato

Phaedo 69e). At the conclusion of Socrates' argument, Cebes replies in part, "there would then be much good hope, Socrates, that what you say is true; but to believe this requires a good deal of faith and persuasive argument, to believe that the soul still exists after a man has died and that it still possesses some capability and intelligence" (Plato *Phaedo* 70b). We can infer from Cebes' words that Socrates has great faith, but that he (Cebes) will require additional dialogue in order to be convinced.

In Plato's *Crito*, it is Crito, rather than Satan, who attempts to dissuade Socrates from crossing the threshold. Crito tells Socrates that there are many with money, including himself, who would use it to provide for Socrates' escape from jail. They would also bribe any would-be informers to cover their and his tracks. "It is not much money that some people require to save you and get you out of here. Further, do you not see that those informers are cheap, and that not much money would be needed to deal with them? My money is available and ... there are those strangers here ready to spend money" (Plato *Crito* 45a-b). After leaving prison, Crito could have Socrates secreted away to Thessaly where he would be protected by friends (Plato *Crito* 45c). Adding to the temptation, Crito tries to shame Socrates into escaping by endeavoring to convince him that it would be unjust to his family and ruin the reputation of his friends if he did not choose to carry out the escape plan.

Besides, Socrates, I do not think that what you are doing is just, to give up your life when you can save it... Moreover, I think you are betraying your sons by going away and leaving them, when you could bring them up and educate them. ... I feel ashamed on your behalf and on behalf of us, your friends, lest all that has happened to you be thought due to cowardice on our part... (Plato *Crito* 45c-e)

Socrates explores these accusations by questioning Crito and fashioning a line of argument which successfully refutes Crito's reasoning. Speaking on behalf of the laws of Athens, Socrates professes,

Do not value either your children or your life or anything else more than goodness... If you do this deed, you will not think it better or more just or more pious here, nor will any one of your friends... As it is, you depart, if you depart, after being wronged not by us, the laws, but by men; but if you depart after shamefully returning wrong for wrong and mistreatment for mistreatment, after breaking your agreements and commitments with us, after mistreating those you should mistreat least —yourself, your friends, your country, and us— we shall be angry with you while you are still alive, and our brothers, the laws of the underworld, will not receive you kindly, knowing that you tried to destroy us as far as you could. (Plato *Crito* 54b-c)

In conjunction with these words of Socrates, we may recognize a similar theme in the following words of Jesus to his disciples when discussing eternal life, “For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?” (Mark 8:35-37). Plato concludes *Crito* with Socrates reconciled to abiding by the rule of law, “As far as my present beliefs go, if you speak in opposition to them, you will speak in vain. ... Let it be then, Crito, and let us act in this way, since this is the way the god is leading us” (Plato *Crito* 54d-e).

After passing this final trial and not succumbing to Crito and his plans for escape, Socrates must now fulfill his death sentence. He must drink the hemlock.

And he offered the cup to Socrates, who took it quite cheerfully, Echecrates, without a tremor or any change of feature or color, but looking at the man from under his eyebrows as was his wont, asked: ‘What do you say about pouring a libation from this drink? Is it allowed?’ – ‘We only mix as much as we believe will suffice,’ said the man. I understand, Socrates said, but one is allowed, indeed one must, utter a prayer to the gods that the journey from here to yonder may be

fortunate. This is my prayer and may it be so. And while he was saying this, he was holding the cup, and then drained it calmly and easily. (Plato *Phaedo* 117b-c)

Thus, we see that Socrates confronted the “evil” of death, secure in the knowledge that he was following the god, and in doing so, fearlessly crossed the threshold.

There is not much written about either Jesus or Socrates after they’ve crossed the threshold, but before they’ve been resurrected. According to the Apostle’s Creed, Jesus “descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven.” These three lines reveal three additional elements of Campbell’s initiation phase contained within the hero cycle, namely, atonement with the father, an apotheosis, and the attaining of the ultimate boon (labeled as “elixir theft” in Campbell’s diagram in Figure 1). We will examine each of these in more detail.

Campbell describes atonement as “at-one-ment” which in order to be successfully achieved “requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself. ...One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy” (Campbell 1973, 130). Many of the previous trials of initiation prepared Jesus to be humble and dispense with his ego, such that “the mystagogue [may now] entrust the symbols of office ... to a son who has been effectually purged ... for whom the just, impersonal exercise of the powers will not be rendered impossible by unconscious ... motives of self-aggrandizement, personal preference, or resentment” (Campbell 1973, 136). The process of atonement with the father begins with his final trial at his crucifixion. It is here that he proves he is ready to “become himself the father. And he is competent, consequently, now to enact himself the role of initiator, the guide ... purged of hope and fear, and at peace in the understanding of the revelation of being” (Campbell 1973, 137). We can infer Jesus’

belief in a merciful father when he prays for the forgiveness of his transgressors. “And Jesus said, ‘Father forgive them; for they know not what they do’” (Luke 23:34). In addition, he begins to exhibit the forgiving mercy of the father himself (assuming the role of father/initiator) when he grants salvation to the repentant criminal crucified with him. “And he said to him, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingly power.’ And he [Jesus] said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise’” (Luke 23:42-43). The former biblical verse also serves as an additional example of Jesus’ reliance on a merciful father, for how else could he proclaim to be in paradise this day when he is suffocating and bleeding to death on a cross!

Jesus’ crucifixion, then, comprises many elements of the initiation because not only is it the final trial and the atonement, but also, the final purging of his ego, self, and soul. The final moments of the crucifixion represent Jesus’ descent into hell. While hanging on the cross, “at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ ...And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last” (Mark 15:34 & 37). As Pope Benedict XVI contends,

We must not forget that these words of the crucified Christ are the opening line of one of Israel’s prayers (Ps 22:1 [21:2]), which summarizes in a shattering way the needs and hopes of this people chosen by God and apparently at the moment so utterly abandoned by him. This prayer that rises from the sheer misery of God’s seeming eclipse ends in praises of God’s greatness. This element, too, is present in Jesus’ death cry which has been recently described by Ernst Kasemann as a prayer sent up from hell, as a raising of a standard, the first commandment, in the wilderness of God’s apparent absence: ‘The Son still holds on to faith when faith seems to have become meaningless and the earthly reality proclaims absent the God of whom the first thief and the mocking crowd speak – not for nothing His cry is not for life and survival, not for himself, but for the Father. His cry stands against the reality of the whole world.’ (Ratzinger 2004, 297)

The hell that Jesus enters then is not the physical locale of fire and brimstone, but rather, “a loneliness that could no longer be penetrated and transformed by the word of another... a state of abandonment ... so deep that no ‘You’ could reach into it any more ... real, total loneliness and dreadfulness ...” (Ratzinger 2004, 300).

His atonement is achieved through his abandonment of self to the One (i.e. placing himself completely in the presence of God). In a dogmatic sense, Jesus’ atonement for the sins of all through death on the cross was accomplished by his action of utter selflessness (letting go, abandoning and transcending the self) in order to achieve unity (wholeness) by becoming One with the Father. It is through this ultimate atonement or reconciliation with the One that he points the way for others to follow.

Campbell explains the process of “at-oneness” as follows:

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands — and the two are atoned. (Campbell 1973, 147)

Jesus’ apotheosis occurs after his crucifixion with his rising from the dead and, subsequent, ascension into heaven. Matthew describes the post-crucifixion events and Jesus’ glorification by the populous:

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two ... and the earth shook ... the tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised... When the centurion and those who were with him... saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:51-54)

Matthew also describes the exaltation upon the discovery of Jesus’ resurrection:

And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ... But, the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen as he said.” (Matthew 28:2-3 & 5-6).

Luke describes the apotheosis of Jesus this way:

And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.” (Luke 24:2-5).

Further, he relays Jesus’ ascension into heaven. “Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51). When the resurrected Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene in John’s Gospel, he says to her, “... go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17). Thus, by rising from the dead, Jesus, the archetypal hero, has achieved eternal life, “the supreme boon ... [of] the Indestructible Body” (Campbell 1973, 176). He has overcome the “evil” of death, as Socrates mockingly calls it in Plato’s *Apology*.

Before we discuss Jesus’ return (resurrection) and bestowing of the boon, let’s review the rest of the initiation stage as it applies to Socrates. Plato’s writings do not specifically discuss atonement, exaltation (apotheosis), or an attainment of a boon. However, we may infer some of these things. Socrates’ faith in the god (the father figure with whom one is atoned) is present at the end of *Crito*, “Let it be then, Crito, and let us act in this way, since this is the way the god is leading us” (Plato *Crito* 54d-e). His faith is further confirmed in *Phaedo*, when he states, “I should be wrong not to resent dying if

I did not believe that I should go first to other wise and good gods, and then to men who have died and are better than men are here. Be assured, that as it is, I expect to join the company of good men” (Plato *Phaedo* 62b-c).

Also in *Phaedo*, Socrates, Cebes, and Simmias engage in a dialogue about the immortality of the soul (Plato *Phaedo* 73a). Socrates explains that there will be a judgment after death.

We are told that when each person dies, the guardian spirit [the protector, the personal daemon] who was allotted to him in life proceeds to lead him to a certain place, whence those who have been gathered there must, after being judged, proceed to the underworld with the guide who has been appointed to lead them thither from here. (Plato *Phaedo* 107d-e)

Thus, in the story of Socrates, it is in Hades that the atonement of the individual’s immortal soul will occur. Socrates goes on to say, “the soul that has led a pure and moderate life finds fellow travelers and gods to guide it, and each of them dwells in a place suited to it” (Plato *Phaedo* 108c). He is also emphatic that the trials of one’s mortal life, prepare the immortal soul for eternal life.

One must make every effort to share in virtue and wisdom in one’s life, for the reward is beautiful and the hope is great. ... That is the reason why a man should be of good cheer about his own soul, if during life he has ignored the pleasures of the body and its ornamentation as of no concern to him and doing him more harm than good, but has seriously concerned himself with the pleasures of learning, and adorned his soul not with alien but with its own ornaments, namely, moderation, righteousness, courage, freedom, and truth, and in that state awaits his journey to the underworld.” (Plato *Phaedo* 114c & e)

Socrates’ apotheosis can be seen in the words of Alcibiades as well as in the words of Socrates himself. In Plato’s *Symposium*, Alcibiades is effusive in his immense praise of Socrates, “here was a man whose strength and wisdom went beyond my wildest dreams!” (Plato *Symposium* 219d). He goes so far as to deify Socrates in life. “... you’ll

never find anyone else, alive or dead, who's even remotely like him. The best you can do is not to compare him to anything human..." (Plato *Phaedo* 221d). In the final scene of Plato's *Apology*, Socrates seems to anticipate his own place in the after-life where he will be seated with other "upright" men and those who have been "unjustly" convicted.

If anyone arriving in Hades will have escaped from those who call themselves jurymen here, and will find those true jurymen who are said to sit in judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Tiptolemus and the other demi-gods who have been upright all their own life, would that be a poor kind of change? Again, what would one of you give to keep company with Orpheus and Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer? I am willing to die many times if that is true. It would be a wonderful way for me to spend my time whenever I met Palamedes and Ajax, the son of Telamon, and any other of the men of old who died through unjust conviction, to compare my experience with theirs. I think it would be pleasant. (Plato *Apology* 41a-b)

Utilizing Buddhist and Taoist principles, Campbell describes the hero's apotheosis in this way: "Those who know, not only that the Everlasting lives in them, but that what they, and all things, really are *is* the Everlasting, dwell in the groves of the wish-fulfilling trees, drink the brew of immortality, and listen everywhere to the unheard music of eternal concord" (Campbell 1973, 167). It is this unheard music that leads Socrates to freely accept his fate as a result of the jury's decision and obey the laws of Athens to the exclusion of all else like "the Corybants [who] seem to hear the music of their flutes" (Plato *Crito* 54d).

Initially, the brew consumed by Socrates seems to be not one of immortality, but rather the mortal-life-taking drink of hemlock. In fact, Socrates sets the stage for not returning from the dead. "Those who are deemed to have lived an extremely pious life are freed and released from the regions of the earth as from a prison. ... Those who have

purified themselves sufficiently by philosophy live in the future altogether without a body...” (Plato *Phaedo* 114c). However, he actually argues something to the contrary.

If the two processes of becoming [living and dying] did not always balance each other as if they were going around in a circle, but generation proceeded from one point to its opposite in a straight line and it did not turn back again to the other opposite or take any turning, do you realize that all things would ultimately be in the same state, be affected in the same way, and cease to become? (Plato *Phaedo* 72b)

And, despite sketching a framework for reincarnation, Socrates alludes to something even bolder. When Crito asks him how he should be buried, Socrates replies, “In any way you like... if you can catch me and I do not escape you” (Plato *Phaedo* 115c). A further foreshadowing of his “resurrection” is present in the next lines of *Phaedo* as well. “After I have drunk the poison I shall no longer be with you but will leave you to go and enjoy some good fortunes of the blessed...” (Plato *Phaedo* 115d) and “you must pledge that I will not stay after I die, but that I shall go away” (Plato *Phaedo* 115e).

We now enter the final stage of the monomyth, namely, the hero’s return and bestowing of the boon on mankind. While Campbell lists six subparts to this final stage, for our purposes, I will focus only on the last two, “Master of the Two Worlds” and “Freedom to Live” (Campbell 1973, 37). Campbell defines the “Master of the Two Worlds” as follows: “Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back — not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other — is the talent of the master” (Campbell 1973, 229). Jesus re-crosses the threshold when he is resurrected and appears to his disciples. Luke tells us the story of the walk to Emmaus. Two of Jesus’ disciples are walking from

Jerusalem to a village named Emmaus when the resurrected Jesus meets them on the road. The three men walk and talk about the recent happenings, Jesus' condemnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Initially, they do not recognize him. "When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:30-31). Thus, the ability of the resurrected Jesus to appear in and out of the physical world coincides with the returning archetypal hero as master of both the material and spiritual realms.

Finally, the story surrounding this multidimensional master instills in us the "Freedom to Live."

The goal of the myth is to dispel the need for such life ignorance [guilt v. self-righteousness] by effecting a reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universal will. And this is effected through a realization of the true relationship of the passing phenomena of time to the imperishable life that lives and dies in all." (Campbell 1973, 238)

Hence, the manifold boon brought by Jesus grants us the freedom to live through his expiation of the sins of mankind (the atonement for all), his opening of the gates of heaven (his ascension), and his pointing the way to the salvation of eternal life (unity with God — the One — becoming part of the Indestructible Body). When the resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciples, "he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20:22-23). Towards the end of John's Gospel, John tells the reader, "these [the signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son

of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). John records Jesus’ deliverance of the boon:

And Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day [Recall Socrates being judged by the laws of the underworld in *Crito*, so too does the Word judge those in Jesus’ time]. For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me.’ (John 12:44-50)

Thus, Jesus-the-hero, who has been resurrected and returned crossing back over the threshold of death is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) who by his own example has shown us how to attain the boon, if we are willing to take up our cross and follow him (Mark 8:34).

Recall that our archetypal heroes had a protective figure or helper that assisted them in their adventure. Similarly, to assist us in bearing our own cross, Jesus has provided a helper, the Holy Spirit or Paraclete. “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). The resurrected Jesus transmits the boon-assisting Holy Spirit by breathing upon his disciples as mentioned in John 20:22 above, while Luke describes the day of Pentecost as one in which the Holy Spirit rushes in among the Apostles like a mighty wind and rests upon each of them as tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4).

What of Socrates? Was he too resurrected? Does he, too, return from the threshold, as I alluded to earlier? If we are to follow Campbell's theory of the hero cycle, then the answer is yes, and, I believe, we can infer it from the writings of Plato. Plato's dialogue titled *The Laws* has as one of its main characters, the Athenian Stranger. The Athenian Stranger meets two other men, Kleinias and Megillus, on "the road from Knossos to the cave and temple of Zeus" (Plato *Laws* 625b). Without too much imagination, we can see an interesting parallel between this and the story told by the Greek evangelist Luke where two disciples encounter the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Unlike in Luke's story, the identity of the Athenian Stranger never becomes apparent to his fellow interlocutors. Plato, however, provides the reader with clues which may point to the Athenian Stranger's identity. Along the road, they discuss the political regime and laws. The Athenian Stranger and Kleinias mention Minos and Rhadamanthus by name as two of the lawgivers of old. Isn't it interesting that these were also two of the "true" jurymen of Hades to whose judgment Socrates would subject himself during his speech in the *Apology* (see Plato *Apology* 41a)? Isn't it also coincidental that the three men are on the island of Crete, one of the two places that Socrates mentions is well governed in his dialogue with Crito? "You did not choose to go to Sparta or to Crete, which you are always saying are well governed" (Plato *Crito* 53a). Incidentally, Sparta also happens to be the home of Megillus (see Plato *Laws* 624a). And what of the two processes of becoming mentioned in *Phaedo*, namely that of living and dying, where life comes out of death?

We recall an ancient theory that souls arriving there [the underworld] come from here, and then again that they arrive here and are born here from the dead. If that

is true, that the living come back from the dead, then surely our souls must exist there, for they could not come back if they did not exist... (Plato *Phaedo* 70c-d)

Thus, we may consider this just as much of a foreshadowing of Socrates' resurrection as his statement to Crito about catching him to bury him after he dies (see Plato *Phaedo* 115c).

However, regardless of any circumstantial or inferred evidence for a physical and historical resurrection, Socrates-the-hero undergoes a literary resurrection in the form of Plato's Athenian Stranger. In addition to some of the clues mentioned above, we can see manifestations of Socrates in the words and ideas expressed by the Athenian Stranger throughout *The Laws*. For instance, the following comments by the Athenian Stranger remind one of the "noble lie" discussed by Socrates in the *Republic*: "...could a lawgiver of any worth ever tell a lie more profitable than this (if, that is, he ever has the daring to lie to the young for the sake of a good cause), or more effective in making everybody do all the just things willingly..." (Plato *Laws* 663d-e). Further,

Indeed, this myth is a great example for the lawgiver of how it is possible to persuade the souls of the young of just about anything, if one tries. It follows from this that the lawgiver should seek only the convictions which would do the greatest good for the city ... at every moment throughout the whole of life, in songs and myths and arguments. (Plato *Laws* 664a)

In addition, at the beginning of Book V of *The Laws*, the Athenian Stranger seems to be directly alluding to Socrates' speech in the *Apology* as it pertains to the "evil" of death (see Plato *Apology* 40a) and doing anything to prevent it (see Plato *Apology* 35a-b).

And when he considers survival to be always good, then too does he dishonor rather than honor it [his soul]. For in this case he has given in and allowed the soul to go on supposing that everything done in Hades is bad; he has failed to struggle as he should, teaching and attempting to refute it in order to show that one doesn't know whether things aren't just the opposite... (Plato *Laws* 727d)

One last example is the parallel between the statement of Socrates' humility regarding his own wisdom and the hubris exhibited by others touting theirs (see Plato *Apology* 21d).

As the Athenian Stranger states, "This same failing is the source of everyone's supposing that his lack of learning is wisdom. As a result, we think we know everything when in fact we know, so to speak, nothing" (Plato *Laws* 732a).

Having presented the argument that the Athenian Stranger is the resurrected Socrates come back across the threshold and, thereby, fulfilling the archetypal hero's role as master of two worlds, what is the boon which he bestows upon us? To begin, the Athenian Stranger is no longer the asker of questions to which he does not have the answers. He does not engage in a dialectic using the Socratic method. He is not a philosopher. The Athenian Stranger is a lawgiver.

As I looked now to the speeches we've been going through since dawn until present – and it appears to me that we have not been speaking without some inspiration from gods – they seemed to me to have been spoken in a way that resembles in every respect a kind of poetry. It's probably not surprising for me to have had such a feeling, to have been very pleased at the sight of my own speeches, brought together, as it were; for compared to most of the speeches that I have learned or heard, in poems, or poured out in prose like what's been said, these appeared to me to be both the most well-measured, at any rate, of all, and especially appropriate for the young to hear. I don't think I would have a better model than this to describe for the Guardian of the Laws and Educator... (Plato *Laws* 811c-e)

He is certain in his knowledge and uses argument to persuade others of the correctness of such. Hence, just as the resurrected Jesus used the Holy Spirit to aid in conveying his message to others, so, too, the Athenian Stranger engages the aid of Peitho, the goddess of persuasion. The Athenian Stranger is also the follower of Socrates in a capacity similar to the one he mentions in Book VI of *The Laws*; the lawgiver who "must

necessarily have left very many such things that require being set right by some follower” (Plato *Laws* 769d-e). In this sense, it is the Athenian Stranger who “sets right” the laws began by Socrates in the “city in speech” of the *Republic*.

By setting right these laws and speaking in accordance with the inspiration of the gods, the Athenian Stranger will bring about a “divine regime” (Plato *Laws* 965c). Just as Moses was to lead the Israelites to a land of milk and honey, so the Athenian Stranger provides the “milk of Magnesia” to Kleinias for the establishment of the new city (see Plato *Laws* 969a). In so doing, he proclaims the virtue of intelligence and alludes to his own divinity:

Of course, if ever some human being who was born adequate in nature, with a divine dispensation, were able to attain these things [knowledge of what was best for the common interest and the will to put it first], he wouldn’t need any laws ruling over him. For no law or order is stronger than knowledge, nor is it right for intelligence to be subordinate, or a slave, to anyone, but it should be ruler over everything, if indeed it is true and really free according to nature. But now, in fact, it is so nowhere or in any way, except to a small extent [Perhaps to the extent that it resides in the Athenian Stranger, a person of divine dispensation.]. (Plato *Laws* 875c-d)

Hence, we see that the Athenian Stranger, as the resurrected Socrates returning from beyond the threshold, brings a boon to mankind in the form of a divine regime just as the boon of the resurrected Jesus allowed man to enter into the Kingdom of God. Additionally, it is the Athenian Stranger, as the master of two worlds, who offers assistance to Kleinias in establishing the Nocturnal Council; those Guardians of the Law “who are to associate with them [transgressors of the law] for the purposes of admonishment and the salvation of the soul” (Plato *Laws* 909a). “In this, at least, even I [the Athenian Stranger] would with an eager spirit become your helper, making use of

my very extensive experience and inquiry concerning such matters” (Plato *Laws* 968b). Consequently, the Athenian Stranger provides mankind with the “freedom to live” through his creation of the soul-saving Nocturnal Council and the divine regime of Magnesia. “Now, if indeed, this divine council should come into being for us, dear comrades, the city ought to be handed over to it; ... And what we touched on in speech a little while ago as a dream, when we somehow mixed together a certain image of a community of head and intelligence, will really be almost a perfected waking vision...” (Plato *Laws* 969b).

CHAPTER THREE: BESTOWING THE LESSER BOONS

That person proves his worth who can make us want to listen when he is with us
and think when he is gone.

—Grit

As mentioned in the Introduction, our two archetypal heroes not only presented us with the gift of the ultimate boon of faith in an immortal soul participating in an eternal life, but they also granted us “lesser” boons, such as egalitarianism, equality of the sexes, the examination of self, living a good life, and nonviolent resistance to tyranny. These life lessons have been taught by both Socrates and Jesus, faithfully recorded by their students and disciples, and intricately woven into their respective mythologies over time. While these boons may pale in comparison to the Indestructible Body, nevertheless, they strike similar chords with people of all societies, living in past, present, and future generations. Notably, then, the universality and timelessness of these gifts instill in them a certain pedagogical importance which prepares those of us living in the physical world for our own hero journey, and, ultimately, our own crossing over the threshold.

In Chapter 2, we noted that both Socrates and Jesus were teachers or educators and engaged in *public* ministry. The word *public* is important because it denotes that both men taught openly and did not seclude themselves behind the walls of an academy. Thus, the life lessons that they so earnestly conveyed to others were not restricted to elites, but instead, open to any and all who would listen. Recall that Socrates held

conversations in the marketplace and that Jesus taught sitting in the grass on the side of a mountain. Of course, this does not mean that the elites were excluded for both men taught them as well, such as when Jesus would accept the company of Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, at night (John 3:1-2) and Socrates had attended a banquet at the home of Agathon, a Greek tragic playwright (Plato *Symposium* 172b). Rather, their *public* discourse set the stage for the principle of egalitarianism that both espoused.

Socrates' belief in egalitarianism helps to explain the significance, in one sense, of his travelling "down to the Piraeus" in the opening line of Plato's *Republic* (Plato *Republic* 327a). The Piraeus was Athens' harbor town described as a polyglot teeming with sailors and immigrants (Hughes 2010, 184-185). To the aristocrats, and, likely, to many common Athenians, this sea town was a place which housed inferior cultural and economic classes of people. However, this was where Socrates found his audience, designed the "city in speech," and relayed the allegory of the cave. In addition to the Piraeus, Socrates would also engage in dialogue with those present in the Agora, the Athenian marketplace. As Xenophon tells us,

Moreover, he was always visible. For in the early morning he used to go on walks and to the gymnasia, and when the agora was full he was visible there, and for the remainder of the day he was always where he might be with the most people. And he spoke for the majority of the time, and it was possible for anyone who wished to hear him. (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.1.10)

Indeed, *where* Socrates taught was quite egalitarian, but so, too, was to *whom* he taught. "Women, slaves, generals, purveyors of sweet and bitter perfumes — he involved all in his dialogues" (Hughes 2010, 5). Recall, previously, we discussed that Socrates taught geometry to a slave in *Meno*, but he also tutored the general Alcibiades on the

virtue of self-knowledge in the dialogue that bears his name; was himself tutored by the woman Diotima regarding the art and virtue of Love professed in *Symposium*; and routinely conversed in the workshop of Simon the shoemaker while in the Agora (Laertius *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.13.1). In both a physical and spiritual sense, Socrates recognizes the value of every human being. This is clearly manifested in his conveyance of Diotima's speech on Love which states in part,

he should realize that the beauty of any one body is brother to the beauty of any other and that if he is to pursue beauty of form he'd be very foolish not to think that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same. ... After this he must think that the beauty of people's souls is more valuable than the beauty of their bodies so that if someone is decent in his soul, even though he is scarcely blooming in his body, our lover must be content to love and care for him..." (Plato *Symposium* 210b-c)

By recognizing Socrates' sense of egalitarianism, we can better discern his desire to awaken it in others with whom he spoke through the perpetuation of his "investigation in the service of the god," and subsequent discovery "that those who had the highest reputation were nearly the most deficient, while those who were thought to be inferior were more knowledgeable" (Plato *Apology* 22a).

Jesus, too, consorted with those that others considered to be beneath them. Like Socrates, Jesus also went down to a port city, Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee, to teach. In fact, it is from the common fishing folk who lived there that Jesus chose his first disciples. "He saw two brothers ... casting a net into the sea; for they were fisherman. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matthew 4:18-19). Mark's Gospel tell us, "... many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples" (Mark 2:15) causing "the scribes of the Pharisees" who saw that to question,

“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (Mark 2:16). To which Jesus responded, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Thus, Jesus is open to proclaiming his message to those who could most benefit from it. He is not an eclectic preaching a Gnostic philosophy. Nor is his preaching restricted to the Jews. This is the import of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus tells the lawyer that the Samaritan, a foreigner, rather than the priest or the Levite, was the one who understood his message and acted upon it by treating all human beings as equals and with respect. “Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, ‘The one who showed mercy on him.’ And Jesus said, ‘Go and do likewise’” (Luke 10:36-37).

Jesus also actively engaged with those who were ignored and forgotten by the reputable members of society, namely, prostitutes, lepers, the blind and deaf, and especially the poor. In Matthew’s Gospel at the conclusion of one of his parables, Jesus tells his audience, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” (Matthew 21:31). Similarly, he tells his disciples, “... it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). In another instance, Jesus heard the cries of two blind men sitting on the roadside over the crowd who were rebuking them and telling them to be silent. Heeding their cries and recognizing their human dignity, he heals them (see Matthew 20:30-34). In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus praises the meager treasury offering made by a poor elderly woman over the more substantial contributions of the rich:

“Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had” (Luke 21:3-4). Jesus summarizes his egalitarian beliefs in this way: “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:11-12). Later, Paul summarizes the egalitarianism practiced by followers of the way (early Christians) in this manner: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Using Paul’s assertion that there is “neither male nor female” as a segue, we will see that Socrates and Jesus supported the equality of women through both their words and actions. When arguing the “city in speech,” Socrates professes, “men and women are by nature the same with respect to guarding the city” (Plato *Republic* 456a), and, therefore, “women of this sort must be chosen along with men of the same sort to live with them and share their guardianship” (Plato *Republic* 456a). Further, “[we] have agreed that it isn’t against nature to assign an education in music, poetry, and physical training to the wives of the guardians” (Plato *Republic* 456b). Hence, we see that Socrates espouses the education of women and their participation in the public sphere of society.

But for Socrates, women possessed abilities greater than that of a mere physical warrior. In *Menexenus*, Socrates credits a woman, Aspasia, with intellectual prowess when serving as his rhetoric instructor as well as being the true author of Pericles’ funeral oration.

I happen to have no mean teacher of oratory. She is the very woman who has produced — along with a multitude of other good ones — the one outstanding

orator among the Greeks, Pericles, son of Xanthippus. ... I heard Aspasia declaim a whole funeral oration on these same dead ... at the time when she was composing the funeral oration which Pericles delivered..." (Plato *Menexenus* 235e and 236b)

Further, in *Oeconomicus*, Socrates refers Critoboulus to Aspasia regarding matters pertaining to the education of good wives. "I'll introduce you to Aspasia, who will display all these things to you more knowledgeably than I" (Xenophon *Oeconomicus* 3.15). According to Socrates, Diotima, too, was a woman of extraordinary intellectual capacity. "I [Socrates] shall try to go through for you the speech about Love I once heard from a woman of Mantinea, Diotima — a woman who was wise about many things besides this: once she even put off the plague for ten years by telling the Athenians what sacrifices to make. She is the one who taught me the art of love..." (Plato *Symposium* 201d).

More than warriors and politicians, more than teachers and mentors, for Socrates, women could also be successful in business. In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Aristarchus was lamenting the fact that he is being bankrupted by caring for the needs of fourteen poor abandoned female relatives (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 2.7.1). Through his dialectic of questioning, Socrates enlightened Aristarchus regarding the untapped potential residing in the fourteen "free-born, liberally-educated" souls residing under his roof. After their conversation, Aristarchus raised the capital necessary for the women to create what amounted to a textile business producing cloaks, tunics, mantles and vests. Their venture was so successful that Aristarchus later quipped to Socrates "that they were blaming him [Aristarchus] for being the only one in the house who ate although he was idle" (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 2.7.12). Thus, in Socrates' view, the notion of equality

between the sexes was apparent. To him, women should be educated, serve the city in the same capacities as men, engage in industry, and even instruct men, as well as other women, in both politics and life skills.

While Socrates' examples of equality primarily involve the physical and intellectual capacities of women, Jesus expands the notion of equality to include a commonness of spirit and soul. Jesus often praised the faith displayed and lived by women. Recall the poor old woman in Luke 21:1-4 cited above or the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair to whom he consolingly states, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Further, there was the woman in Luke 8:43 with a "flow of blood" issue who was instantly healed when she surreptitiously touched Jesus' cloak while he walked among the crowds of people. Here, too, he consoles the trembling woman with the words, "Daughter, your faith has made you well" (Luke 8:48).

Like Socrates though, Jesus recognizes the ability and desire of women to be educated. In Sychar, Jesus engages in a conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well instructing her on the spring of eternal life (John 4:15). His disciples are incredulous, not only because she's a woman, but also because she was a Samaritan who were held in disdain by the Jews (see John 4:27). From this example, we see that Jesus' message and desire to educate transcends not only gender, but also race. In another instance, when Jesus and his disciples visited the home of Martha and Mary, Mary "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching" (Luke 10:39). When Martha complained that her sister was neglecting her womanly duties (i.e. serving their guests), Jesus gently rebuked her saying,

“Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42).

Thus, at a time when women were treated “as inferior and a species of property” (Johnson 2010, 142), Jesus went against the grain by not only educating them, but also by accepting them as disciples. Luke tells us: “Soon afterward he [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the Twelve were with him, and also some women ... who provided for them out of their means” (Luke 8:1-3). From Luke’s passage, we can infer that these women served as disciples of Jesus who preached his message alongside the men and that some of the women involved in his ministry possessed considerable wealth, capable of providing for the material needs of over seventeen people. Jesus’ practice of equality with regards to women continued among his followers after his death. Evidence of this can be found in Paul’s writings, such as in his Letter to the Romans, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the Church of Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Romans 16:1-2).

Finally, “it is one of the lessons of the life of Jesus that women often show more physical courage than men” (Johnson 2010, 143). For instance, we are told that all of the Apostles and disciples of Jesus scatter after his arrest. We are told that Peter denies Jesus three times, but, other than that, the Gospels are silent as to the whereabouts of the men during Jesus’ trial, scourging, and trek to Golgotha while carrying the cross. However,

the women “bewail and lament him” on his way to the place called The Skull (Luke 23:27). The women were also prominent at the crucifixion. As Mark tells us,

There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome, who when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered to him; and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.” (Mark 15:40-41).

Luke vaguely alludes to the men being present at the crucifixion stating only, “... all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things” (Luke 23:49). Lastly, in John’s Gospel, John himself is the only male mentioned in attendance at the crucifixion, while the women form a quorum: “... standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” (John 19:25). It is, therefore, fitting that Jesus chose to appear after his resurrection first to the women who exhibited such strength, devotion, and moral courage throughout his last days. All four of the Gospel writers are consistent in their portrayal of this part of the story — in Matthew, “Jesus met them [Mary Magdalene and the other Mary] and said, ‘Hail!’” (Matthew 28:9); in Mark, “he [Jesus] appeared first to Mary Magdalene” (Mark 16:9); in Luke, “it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this [their encounter with the two angels proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection] to the apostles” (Luke 24:10); and in John, “... she turned around and saw Jesus standing ... Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’” (John 20:14 & 18).

Recognizing that both men wanted to share their teachings with all people, rich and poor, male and female, it becomes evident that each looked beyond the physical characteristics of the individual, concentrating instead on the human dignity, the inner

beauty, the soul of all whom they encountered. Also note that since we are portraying both Jesus and Socrates as archetypal heroes, their concern for the soul of others directly coincides with their being a “Master of Two Worlds” in the sense of Campbell’s hero cycle. So, too, by awakening in us the need to analyze and better ourselves, do these heroes equally confer the lesser boon of an “examined life.” At his trial, Socrates recalls, “... I went to each of you privately and conferred upon him what I say is the greatest benefit, by trying to persuade him not to care for any of his belongings before caring that he himself should be as good and as wise as possible...” (Plato *Apology* 36c). Further, he challenges the Athenians, “are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?” (Plato *Apology* 29e). Socrates recognizes and laments the many distractions present in our physical lives which serve to detract us from what is important. As he tells Simmias, “Only the body and its desires cause war, civil discord and battles, for all wars are due to the desire to acquire wealth, and it is the body and the care of it, to which we are enslaved, which compel us to acquire wealth, and all this makes us too busy to practice philosophy” (Plato *Phaedo* 66c-d). Socrates summarizes this lesser boon when he addresses the jury, as follows: “I say that it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living for men” (Plato *Apology* 38a).

Jesus, too, often confronts us to be aware of our personal failings, and once becoming aware of them to overcome them. This is quite evident in an episode of John’s

Gospel where the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman to him who was caught in adultery. Jesus tells them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). As a result, “they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him” (John 8:9). Ultimately, Jesus tells her, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again” (John 8:11). Thus, we see that Jesus’ words prompted an examination of conscience by the men who brought the woman to be condemned and from the woman herself whose life was spared so that she may live it better in the future. Similarly, in Luke, Jesus encourages us to not be hypocritical, but rather, to gain in self-awareness. “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but not notice the log that is in your own? ... You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye” (Luke 6:41-42).

Like Socrates, Jesus warns that the pursuit of wealth can blind us to those things that are truly important. We can see this in his reply to the rich man, who already following all the commandments of Moses, asked how he could receive eternal life. Jesus tells him, “... go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:21-22). Jesus then warns those around him, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24-25). Jesus summarizes this lesson as follows: “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits

himself?” (Luke 9:25). By which he means that the pursuit of material goods or worldly power will mean nothing if you corrupt your soul in the process, thereby condemning yourself for eternity.

Hence, according to both Jesus and Socrates, a direct consequence of examining one’s life would be the desire to live a good life. In fact, if one chooses not to live a good life, his existence is sheer folly. As Socrates relates to Crito:

Socrates: And is life worth living with a body that is corrupted and in bad condition?

Crito: In no way.

Socrates: And is life worth living for us with that part of us corrupted that unjust action harms and just action benefits? Or do we think that part of us, whatever it is, that is concerned with justice and injustice, is inferior to the body?

Crito: Not at all.

Socrates: It is more valuable?

Crito: Much more.

Socrates: We should not then think so much of what the majority will say about us, but what he will say who understands justice and injustice, the one, that is, and the truth itself. (Plato *Crito* 47e-48a)

Similarly, Jesus says to his disciples:

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done. (Matthew 16:24-27)

When Jesus speaks of “repaying one for what he has done,” he is talking about the need to perform good works as an integral part of living a good life. Here is where we find the boon of the Golden Rule: “So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them” (Matthew 7:12). Jesus explains the meaning of his statement further with a parable.

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:24-27)

In Jesus’ parable, we may view the house as one’s soul; the process of building the house as engaging in good works, and the living of a good life as the rock that supports the soul and aids it in weathering the stormy experiences of this life. Jesus is attempting to convey a similar message in Matthew 16:24-27 quoted above such that when one “denies himself” he is acting unselfishly and beneficially toward others. Further, if he thinks only of himself and acts in a greedy or covetous manner, thereby doing nothing for others (i.e. “save his life”), “he will lose his life” as a result. In other words, he will not gain the ultimate boon of eternal life.

Socrates concurs with the importance of conducting good works as the way to living a good life. As he states in the *Apology*, “You are wrong, sir, if you think that a man who is any good at all should take into account the risk of life or death; he should look to this only in his actions, whether what he does is right or wrong, whether he is acting like a good or a bad man” (Plato *Apology* 28b-c). Socrates parallels Jesus’ teaching with his metaphor of the cave stating that the *educated* (those who’ve seen the light and truth which exist outside of the cave) “would fail because they’d refuse to act” (Plato *Republic* 519c). Their refusal relates to “refus[ing] to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors, whether they are of less worth or of greater” (Plato *Republic* 519d). Thus, in this instance, we easily see that the educated

by failing to act for the benefit of the uneducated mirror those who would “save their life” or who would “build their house on sand.” To extrapolate the analogy even further, these same individuals would likely also be reticent to go “down to the Piraeus” or to “eat with sinners.”

Arguably, if we treat all others as equals, are attempting to live a good life, and are performing good works consistent with that life, then it would follow that it is better to suffer injustice than to commit injustice. This may be one of the most important and most challenging lessons shared by Socrates and Jesus. Socrates succinctly stated his position in a conversation with Polus in *Gorgias*:

Polus: So you’d rather want to suffer what’s unjust than do it?

Socrates: For my part, I wouldn’t want either, but if it had to be one or the other, I would chose suffering over doing what’s unjust. (Plato *Gorgias* 469b-c)

We also see this theme addressed in Socrates’ discussion with Crito where he states, “Doing harm to people is no different than wrongdoing. ... One should never do wrong in return, nor do any man harm, no matter what he may have done to you” (Plato *Crito* 49c-d). Stated slightly differently, “neither to do wrong nor to return a wrong is ever correct, nor is doing harm in return for harm done” (Plato *Crito* 49d). Concurring with Socrates on this point, Jesus refutes the Old Testament teaching of Leviticus, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:38-39). Continuing his teaching, Jesus adds, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” (Matthew 5:43-44).

Through a poetic irony of mythic proportion, the stories of both men conclude with them suffering injustice, enduring a show trial, forgiving their persecutors, and displaying forms of both nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience throughout their respective ordeals. Emulating the virtues of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience is the last of the lesser boons bestowed upon us by our heroes.

Neither the teachings of Jesus or Socrates were accepted by the majority during the time in which they lived. In fact, each man was condemned to death by those he sought to teach, Socrates by the Athenians and Jesus by the Jews. Hence, the words of Jesus ring true in describing himself, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, and among his own kin, and his own house” (Mark 6:4). So also do Socrates’ words, “It is for the sake of a short time, men of Athens, that you will acquire the reputation and the guilt, in the eyes of those who want to denigrate the city, of having killed Socrates, a wise man ...” (Plato *Apology* 38c).

Both men fully recognized that they had made enemies as a direct result their teachings, specifically, because they challenged the *status quo* and exposed the hypocrisy of those who possessed wealth and wielded political power. These actions of *challenge* and *exposure* would form the core of the civil disobedience engaged in by both men in their respective societies. Socrates reproves his accusers,

Do not be angry with me for speaking the truth; no man will survive who genuinely opposes you or any other crowd and prevents the occurrence of many unjust and illegal happenings in the city. A man who really fights for justice must lead a private, not a public, life if he is to survive for even a short time. (Plato *Apology* 31e-32a)

After receiving the jury's guilty verdict and sentence of death, Socrates is not cowed, but emboldened continuing to defy those who unjustly condemned him stating,

I was convicted because I lacked not words but boldness and shamelessness and the willingness to say to you what you would most gladly have heard from me, lamentations and tears and my saying and doing many things that I say are unworthy of me but that you are accustomed to hear from others. (Plato *Apology* 38d-e)

Further,

You did this [i.e. condemned Socrates] in the belief that you would avoid giving an account of your life... There will be more people to test you... You are wrong if you believe that by killing people you will prevent anyone from reproaching you for not living in the right way. (Plato *Apology* 39c-d)

Thus, in these powerful words of Socrates, we learn that he is willing to stand up for what he believes in despite the threat of physical death. In other words, he will not kowtow to the "powers that be" by making a false public display of repentance in order to save his own skin. This piece of his story foreshadows Socrates' further civil disobedience which is to come.

However, before having that discussion, let's discuss Jesus' denunciation of the hypocrisy of those in power. Recalling Mark 10:25 (as previously cited), we know that Jesus placed little value on material wealth as he publically proclaims that it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Statements like these would easily arouse the ire of wealthy Jews (i.e. Pharisees and scribes), who, as we will see, would also have been able to exert considerable political influence in ancient Palestine. It is not only the preoccupation with acquiring wealth which Jesus decries, but also the abuse of power which often accompanies it. Concerning the scribes, he states,

Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation. (Mark 12:38-40)

Jesus also rebukes those who wield religious and political power unjustly, such as the Pharisees,

Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness. You fools! ... But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done without neglecting the others. (Luke 11:39 & 42)

In a similar vein, he admonishes the lawyers too.

Woe to you lawyers also! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers... Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering. (Luke 11:46-48 & 52)

Note the common theme between Jesus' and Socrates' words that current and future knowledge can be harmed by willingly perpetuating ignorance. We see this underlying message with Socrates stating that "Athens has killed a wise man" and with Jesus where killing prophets results in a loss of the key to knowledge.

Their deaths are not only a result of ignorance, but also fear and envy. Fear was present among those within the established power structures of their local communities because the teachings of Jesus and Socrates demanded change and threatened the existence of the *status quo*. For example, when the Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus asking,

"Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, "And why do you

transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ... So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" (Matthew 15:2-3 & 6-9)

The final act of defiance, as perceived by the Jewish power structure, occurred when Jesus drove the merchants from the temple in Jerusalem (an overt act of civil disobedience). At that point, we are told, "The chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching" (Mark 11:18).

Why was Jesus' act of cleansing the temple considered an act of civil disobedience? According to John Dear,

The Temple system worked in conjunction with the Roman empire to keep the people subdued and oppressed. ... To be faithful to God, one had to visit God in the Temple and pay a considerable sum to the authorities in the process. Payment of the Temple tax was required. Since Roman coins bore the emperor's image, the emperor claimed to be God, and Jews were not to carry "graven images" of "foreign gods," the Jewish authorities developed their own Temple currency and exchanged Roman coins for their own money, making a significant profit from the exchange." (Dear 1994).

Thus, when Jesus "overturned the tables of the money-changers" (Mark 11:15), he was overturning the *status quo* and advocating for an immediate change to the imperial-religious complex of the day. Clearly, the Jewish authorities wanted to maintain their power and influence not only among their own people, but also with regards to the rulers of Rome's empire. As John's Gospel tells us,

the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What do we do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient

for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.” (John 11:47-50)

As a policy of *realpolitik*, their motive was transparent to Pontius Pilate, the Roman prelate of Judea, who “perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him [Jesus] up” (Mark 15:10).

Regarding Socrates, the fear prevalent among those in power was derived from two sources: 1) the *demos* and 2) rapid societal change. In fifth century Athens, “the *hoi polloi*, the people, the great unwashed, were something to be feared, to be mistrusted” (Hughes 2011, 12). Further, “Athenian society was divided into strict age groups — strength was known to reside in youth, wisdom in age” (Hughes 2011, 22). In strict contrast to both of these norms, Socrates surrounded himself with young men who heard him publically question those “who believe they have some knowledge but know little or nothing” (Plato *Apology* 23c). Therefore, these young men, in emulation of Socrates, questioned their elders as well and, invariably, derived the same result, namely, exposing the ignorance of so-called “knowledgeable” men. Thus, if it was perceived that the elders were not as wise as was thought, but the youth still held the strength, and the *hoi polloi* were dissatisfied with the humiliation, disease and carnage brought about by Athens’ participation and loss in recent the Peloponnesian War, we can easily see how the existing elite would feel threatened by Socrates and his popularity in the Agora. Not only did Socrates challenge the *status quo*, but Athens itself may have been ripe for another revolution or coup, as Socrates himself seems to confess when he refers to Athens as “a great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up by a kind of gadfly” (Plato *Apology* 30e).

However, despite Socrates' goading of the elite, his most overt act of civil disobedience, the one after which he forever lived under a cloud of suspicion, was his failure to obey an order issued by the Thirty (the oligarchy established in Athens after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War), namely, to bring Leon of Salamis before them to be executed. As Socrates tells us,

They gave many such orders to many people, in order to implicate as many as possible in their guilt. Then I showed again, not in words, but in action, that, if it were not rather vulgar to say so, death is something I couldn't care less about, but that my whole concern is not to do anything unjust or impious. That government, powerful as it was, did not frighten me into any wrongdoing. When we left the Hall, the other four went to Salamis and brought in Leon, but I went home. (Plato *Apology* 32d)

Both the Pharisees and the Athenians addressed the perceived threat posed by Socrates and Jesus by following the advice of Thrasyboulos to Periandros:

What happened was that he [Periandros] sent a herald to Thrasyboulos to ask advice about how he could best administer the city so as to make his rule as secure as possible. Thrasyboulos led the man who had come from Periandros outside the town and into a field planted with grain. While they walked together through the grain crop, Thrasyboulos kept questioning the herald about why he had come from Corinth, the reason for his arrival from Corinth, and all the while, whenever he saw one of the stalks extending above the others, he would cut it off and throw it away, until the finest and tallest of the grain has been destroyed. ... Periandros understood the meaning of what Thrasyboulos had done and perceived that he was advising him to murder the prominent men of the city." (Herodotus *The Histories* 5.92ζ & η)

While both Jesus and Socrates were aware that they were making enemies as a result of their public discourse, both were also aware that soon these enemies would want them dead. In fact, we should note that each man prophesied his own death. At his trial, Socrates said, "... I am very unpopular with many people. This will be my undoing, if I am undone, not Meletus or Anytus but the slanders and envy of many people. This has

destroyed many other good men and will, I think, continue to do so. There is no danger that it will stop me” (Plato *Apology* 28a-b). Similarly, on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus says to the Apostles, “... the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him” (Mark 10:33-34).

And yet, despite all of their foreknowledge, each continued to conduct his mission and maintain his convictions. As Socrates said above, “this [the threat of death] will not stop me.” Further he states, “I will obey the god rather than you [men of Athens], and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy” (Plato *Apology* 29d). For Jesus’ part, after he tells his disciples that he will be killed, “Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying ‘God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’ But, he [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men’” (Matthew 16:22-23). Through this passage we realize that Jesus too will “obey the god” and continue his preaching until the time of his arrest and crucifixion. Even though Peter has the best of intentions and desires to save his friend from a horrible fate, just like Crito wanting to secret away Socrates (see *Crito* 45a-c), Jesus must be obedient to a higher calling. We are reminded of this in his prayer at Gethsemane, “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39). Socrates too answers to this higher calling, and it comes from the laws, “Be persuaded by us who have brought you up, Socrates. Do not value ... your life or anything else more

than goodness... Do not let Crito persuade you, rather than us, to do what he says” (Plato *Crito* 54b & d).

With regards to their show trials, both men were condemned for impiety or blasphemy. Just as these men openly taught in the public sphere, so, too, were their charges publically displayed. “Written in deep red on a plaster wall, Socrates’ full charges were set out” (Hughes 2011, 35):

Melitus, the son of Melitus, of Pittea, impeaches Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus, of Alopece: Socrates is guilty, inasmuch as he does not believe in the Gods whom the city worships, but introduces other strange deities; he is also guilty, inasmuch as he corrupts the young men, and the punishment he has incurred is death. (Laertius *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.5.19)

The charges against Jesus were placed at the top of the cross upon which he was to be crucified.

Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. The chief priest of the Jews then said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” (John 19:19-21)

So we see that Socrates was accused by Meletus such that “you [Socrates] do not believe in gods at all” (Plato *Apology* 26c), while the Sanhedrin charged Jesus with declaring that he was the Messiah spoken of in Jewish scripture. It is also important to note that both the trials of Socrates and Jesus took place in religious, as opposed to secular, settings. Socrates made his defense in the *Stoa Basileios*, “the home of the city’s [Athens’] religious court” (Hughes 2010, 27), while Jesus was questioned before the council of chief priests, elders, and scribes (Mark 14:53-55) called the Sanhedrin, “the

supreme religious body in the land of Israel during the time of the Holy Temple” (Schoenberg 2011, under “Sanhedrin”).

Socrates successfully refutes Meletus’ charge concluding, “There is no way in which you could persuade anyone even of small intelligence that it is possible for one and the same man to believe in spiritual but not also in divine things, and then again for that same man to believe neither in spirits nor in gods...” (Plato *Apology* 27e-28a). The self-refuting logic of Meletus recalls that of the scribes when they accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan. “He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons” (Mark 3:22). Jesus refutes this accusation stating, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand... And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand...” (Mark 3:23-24 & 26). However, Jesus never refutes the charge of being the Messiah. In Matthew’s Gospel, when he is directly questioned by Caiaphas, a high priest in the Sanhedrin, if he is the Messiah, Jesus replies, “You have said so” (Matthew 26:64). He then continues with a quote from the Book of Daniel. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus responds, “I am” (Mark 14:62) and then continues with the same quote from Daniel. Is this “I am” an affirmation that he is the Messiah or was Jesus invoking the name of the God of Moses, the “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14) in the burning bush, before answering Caiaphas? If the answer to this question is the latter, it still would not have changed the outcome of Jesus’ trial, for even in Matthew’s Gospel Jesus was condemned to death despite his indirect answer.

In addition, no credible witnesses were presented to testify in either trial against Socrates or Jesus. In the case of Socrates, neither Meletus nor Anytus could produce any

witnesses to corroborate their accusations against Socrates. Nor could they entice any current or former “corrupted” disciple of Socrates, or any of their respective family members, to say anything against him. As Socrates correctly states, “If I corrupt some young men and have corrupted others, then surely some of them who have grown older and realized that I gave them bad advice when they were young should now themselves come up here to accuse me and avenge themselves” (Plato *Apology* 33d). When Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, we are told, “Now the chief priests and the whole council sought testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, and their witness did not agree” (Mark 14:55-56).

In fact, both Jesus and Socrates tell us that they were falsely accused. As Jesus carries his cross through the streets, he asks the wailing women, “For if they do this [crucifixion] when wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:31). By which he means, that if he is innocent (the green wood) and is still being crucified (burned), he wonders what will they do to those who are truly guilty (the dry wood). At the beginning of the *Apology*, Socrates states, “It is right for me, gentlemen, to defend myself first against the first lying accusations made against me...” (Plato *Apology* 18a). And again later, “I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly” (Plato *Apology* 30d).

An unjust execution was exactly what awaited each man at the hands of those who, in Glaucon’s words, “praised injustice at the expense of justice” to such an extent that “a just person in such circumstances will be whipped, stretched on a rack, chained, blinded with fire, and at the end, when he has suffered every kind of evil, he’ll be

impaled” (Plato *Republic* 361e). But prior to Socrates drinking the hemlock and Jesus being crucified and having his side pierced with a spear (impaled, perhaps?), each would suffer physical humiliation and derision. Regarding Socrates, Diogenes tells us, “And very often, while arguing and discussing points that arose, he was treated with great violence and beaten, and pulled about, and laughed at and ridiculed by the multitude” (Laertius *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.5.6). Similarly, at Jesus’ trial before the council, we are told, “some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’ And the guards received him with blows” (Mark 14:65).

How did each man suffer these affronts to his person and his character? Their responses were a testament to their belief in nonviolence. Socrates “bore all this with great equanimity. So that once, when he had been kicked and buffeted about, and had borne it all patiently, and some one expressed his surprise, he said, ‘Suppose an ass had kicked me would you have had me bring an action against him?’” (Laertius *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.5.6). Even at his trial after being convicted and sentenced to death, Socrates did not curse his accusers. Instead, Socrates says, “There are many other reasons for my not being angry with you for convicting me, men of Athens, and what happened was not unexpected” (Plato *Apology* 35e-36a). Further, “I am certainly not angry with those who convicted me, or my accusers. Of course that was not their purpose when they accused and convicted me, but they thought they were hurting me...” (Plato *Apology* 41d-e). Hence, it is evident that he was truly living out what he

told Crito just prior to his death, “One should never do wrong in return, nor do any man harm, no matter what he may have done to you” (Plato *Crito* 49c-d).

In looking at examples from Jesus life, we see a pattern congruous with that of Socrates. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, “But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...” (Matthew 5:39). On the surface, this may seem to be a strong endorsement for pacifism and “doing nothing” while violence is committed against you, but in fact Jesus was advocating a form of nonviolent resistance. In the time of Jesus, if someone was struck by another, and that person was of an inferior social class, the striker would use the back of his right hand. However, after being struck in such a way, if the strikee “turned the other cheek,” the aggressor could not again hit him with the back of his right hand. Thus, the aggressor now faced a problem. Cultural norms prevented one from using the left hand since it was deemed “unclean” because of its use in cleaning oneself after a bowel movement. Further, if the aggressor used the open palm of his right hand to conduct a subsequent strike, it would be taken as a sign of challenge towards an equal. Social equality was definitely not the message that the superior aggressor wanted to convey to the inferior victim of the strike. Therefore, we now see that Jesus’ advice was not necessarily one of nonviolent passivity, but rather, one of active nonviolent resistance.

In addition, while Jesus may advocate nonviolent resistance, we also see that he wholly abstains from violent resistance, even on the night of his arrest when he knows that shortly afterward he will be executed.

Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:50-52).

At this point in his story, we should recall some of Jesus' most challenging words, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). After being scourged, nailed to a cross, and beginning the process of slow suffocation, Jesus does not curse or condemn his persecutors, but rather puts into practice his former words of challenge when he prays, "Father, for give them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

As we've mentioned previously, neither Jesus nor Socrates feared death. In fact, death was required of them as archetypal heroes so that they may cross the threshold and gain for us the ultimate boon of the Indestructible Body. We are reminded of their fearlessness again during their persecution via their own words. Socrates states, "Be sure that if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way..." (Plato *Apology* 30c-d). Socrates knows that he has an immortal soul, and therefore, the only thing that the jurymen can kill is his physical body. Similarly, Jesus says, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, after that they have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4). Hence, we see that both men understood the price to be paid for maintaining their principles and adhering to the practices of nonviolent civil disobedience in the face of overwhelmingly powerful opposition, so that we may learn from their example, be inspired by it, and

emulate this lesser boon for generations to come. As the resurrected Socrates in the form of the Athenian stranger reminds us, it is our duty to disobey unjust laws:

... nor do we declare any laws correct that are not laid down for the sake of what is common to the whole city. Where the laws exist for the sake of some, we declare the inhabitants to be 'partisans' rather than citizens, and declare that when they assert their ordinances to be the just things, they have spoken in vain. (Plato *Laws* 715b)

CHAPTER FOUR: ADDITIONAL SYMBOLS

Be sure they still will make, not being dead,
and poets shall have flames upon their head,
and harps whereon their faultless fingers fall

—J.R.R. Tolkien, from *Mythopoeia*

While tradition tells us that neither Jesus nor Socrates wrote down any of their teachings, we are privy to some of them through the writings of their students and disciples, namely, the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Plato, and Xenophon. Also through these writings, we note that their common method of teaching took the form of oral public discourse. However, we should note that the style of discourse used by Jesus and Socrates was similar, as well. Jesus used parables and Socrates metaphors. While it is true that Socrates taught via dialectic, he utilized metaphors in doing so. An example of his dialectic can be seen in Book I of the *Republic* where Socrates convinces Thrasymachus that his definition of *justice* as “nothing other than the advantage of the stronger” (Plato *Apology* 338c) is incorrect. However, in Book VII of the *Republic*, Socrates uses the metaphor of the cave to describe how many human beings live their lives in shadow and darkness and need to be turned towards the light in order to realize the truth. Similarly, Jesus taught via parables which themselves were metaphors. For instance, recall the story of “the wise man who built his house upon rock” previously quoted in Matthew 7:24-27. When questioned about his teaching

method, Jesus replied, “This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (Matthew 13:13).

Jesus’ comment provides a critical link for us in understanding the mythological stories surrounding both he and Socrates. The critical link is this: art is essential in transmitting the message. In the case of Jesus, the art was the device of the spoken parable. In the case of Socrates, it was the art of the spoken metaphor. In the case of their students and disciples, it was the written word; the written word assuming the literary art form of myth. C.S. Lewis tells us, “In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can only be understood as an abstraction. ...myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to” (Lewis 1970, 66). Therefore, it was through the element of myth that the disciples and followers of Socrates and Jesus sought to transmit the stories of their mentors to future generations. In Chapter 2, we discussed the major elements of commonality between the stories of Socrates and Jesus as archetypal heroes of myth. In this chapter, we will discuss additional mythological symbols shared between the two stories and its heroes.

To begin, we find that knowledge and wisdom come from above. Moses received the Ten Commandments “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18) on two stone tablets while presiding on “the mountain of God,” Mt Sinai, for forty days and forty nights (see Exodus 24:9-18). In Plato’s *Laws*, three men travel to the cave and temple of Zeus, the law-giving god of the Cretans (Plato *Laws* 624a), located on Mount Ida (Pangle 1988, 513n10). Even ancient Athens bears out this theme, when one considers that the

Areopagus Council sat on elevated polished limestone rocks in order to be closer to the Acropolis (Hughes 2011, 13), while “facing out onto the Agora, man-sized slabs, carved in wood and then stone, displayed the laws of Athens’ political grandfather ... Solon” (Hughes 2011, 29). So, too, the stories of both Jesus and Socrates incorporate this traditional perception of the transmission of knowledge despite their individual messages of distributing that knowledge in an egalitarian fashion, as discussed in Chapter 3. For instance, in the *Republic*, recall that Socrates goes *down* to the Piraeus, and while there, to the house of Polemarchus where he engages in a dialectic on justice. Socrates, the archetypal hero, with boons to bestow on mankind comes down from on-high. So, too, does Jesus when “he went *down* to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them...” (Luke 4:31) [emphasis added].

We continue to see this “knowledge from above” theme throughout the Gospel accounts of Jesus. For example, in Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus proclaims the Beatitudes, he does so after going “up on the mountain” (Matthew 5:1). In addition, when Jesus goes to pray directly to God, we often find him doing so in an elevated place: the Transfiguration occurred “up a high mountain” (Mark 9:2); prior to his betrayal and arrest, he prepared himself by praying on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46). In the story of Socrates, the theme of “knowledge from above” is most evident in the allegory of the cave. As presented in Book VII of the *Republic*, in Socrates’ allegory of the cave, the cave itself is underground, and when the prisoners are released they must “look up toward the light” (Plato *Republic* 515c). They must be dragged “up the rough, steep path” into the sunlight (Plato *Republic* 515e). Therefore, in order for these people to

make the transition from ignorance to wisdom, enlightenment as it were, they must *ascend* in order to attain the reality and truth which lives and is present outside of the cave. Socrates makes a similar point when discussing the earth and heavens with Simmias in *Phaedo*. He compares one who lives at the bottom of the sea thinking that the sea is the sky and who upon reaching the surface of the sea will see things “much purer and more beautiful ... than his own region” (Plato *Phaedo* 109d) with our own rising above the heavens that we know to reach “the true heaven, the true light and the true earth” (Plato *Phaedo* 110a). He declares, “So those things above are in their turn far superior to the things we know” (Plato *Phaedo* 110a).

The cave is another mythological symbol common to the stories of both heroes. A cave is a dark place which delves into the rock of the earth. It is mysterious and what is inside of a cave is often unknown because one’s senses are dulled by the cave itself: you cannot see well because of a lack or absence of light, you cannot hear properly because of the echoes bouncing off of the cave walls. Therefore, the cave is associated with the supernatural, the otherworldly, or the divine. In Plato’s *Laws*, the cave of Zeus was where one would interact with the god in order to receive the laws by which to govern the city. As a child, Zeus himself was hidden in this same cave in Crete by his mother Rhea to protect him from being eaten by his Titan-father Cronus. In a parallel of sorts, the prophet Abraham, to whom all three monotheistic religions trace their origin, was hidden in a cave by his mother to protect him from slaughter by the tyrant King Nimrod (Ginzberg 1913).

In the stories of Jesus and Socrates, caves take on an added significance because they serve as places of transcendence. As we have seen in Socrates' allegory of the cave, when the prisoners are released from their ignorance, represented by chains and fetters, they may stand and turn around seeing for the first time the source of the shadows and the true representations of those previously dark images (see Plato *Republic* 515c). This is the beginning of their process of illumination. In order to continue on their journey, they must transcend the cave by ascending the path that leads upward out of it and into the light of day. As they make the journey from ignorance to truth, they are at first blinded and pained by the intense light. But, as they continue upward, their eyes adjust, at first discerning only shadows, and then, later the fully visible color-filled images of "things in the world above" (Plato *Republic* 515e-516b). In *Phaedo*, we find Socrates quoting Homer as he describes the "the deepest of all chasms ...below the world" (Homer *Iliad* viii.14) which contains the underworld to which all must go to begin their eternal journey after crossing the threshold of death. After being led to the place by their guardian spirit, they are then judged. "Those who are deemed to have lived an extremely pious life are freed and released from the regions of the earth as from a prison; they make their way up to a pure dwelling place..." (Plato *Phaedo* 114c). Here we see that the cave plays a role in our hero's journey as he crosses the threshold and transcends from the cave to that place where he attains the boon of the Indestructible Body.

The cave plays a coincident role in the story of Jesus. In John's Gospel, Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. The body of Lazarus was buried in a tomb which John describes, "it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11:38). After the stone is

removed, Jesus gives thanks to God and calls for Lazarus to come out, which he promptly does. Thus, the cave becomes a magical place for expressing the transcendent power of God. Power and transcendence are expressed in the cave again when Jesus is resurrected. After being taken down from the cross, Jesus' body is given to Joseph of Arimathea who "wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb" (Luke 23:53). Then, at the time of Jesus' resurrection, Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James "found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body" (Luke 24:2-3). After the women told the Apostles what they saw, "Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves" (Luke 24:12). Thus, for Jesus, just as for Socrates, the cave served as the means by which he would cross the threshold, transcend death, and obtain the brass ring of immortality.

One of the most powerful symbols of immortality (or mortality) in the stories of Jesus and Socrates is the cup or chalice. A cup is a vessel usually used to hold that which cannot otherwise be contained, for example, water or wine. A cup can be filled or a cup can be drained. A cup can be used to consume something, thereby making that thing a part of something else. In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades touts Socrates' drinking prowess and great tolerance for alcohol while gulping wine from a cooling jar (see Plato *Symposium* 214a). This, however, is not a mythic representation of the use of a cup. Instead, we should look to the *Phaedo*, where Socrates' describes the soul being held by the body. "The lovers of learning know that when philosophy gets hold of their soul, it is imprisoned in and clinging to the body, and that it is forced to examine things through it

as through a cage (Plato *Phaedo* 82d-e). In this sense, the body acts as a vessel or cup which holds the soul. We cannot help but notice that Socrates describes the body in a negative sense as a cage, implying that if it were not for the body, the soul could not be contained and would be free. Bearing this in mind, we will see that Socrates transforms a cup of death into a cup of life.

At the appointed time of his execution, Socrates had to drink hemlock to carry out his death sentence (see Figure 2). “The slave went out and after a time came back with the man who was to administer the poison, carrying it made ready in a cup ... And he offered the cup to Socrates, who took it quite cheerfully...” (Plato *Phaedo* 117a-b). After being denied permission for the customary libation, Socrates holds the cup, “utters a prayer to the gods,” and then “drains it [the cup] calmly and easily” (Plato *Phaedo* 117c). In this scene, the cup of poison is poured into the vessel which holds the soul. And, Socrates, by draining the cup of hemlock has succeeded in draining his body of Socrates. We understand this through his own words to those present, “after I have drunk the poison I shall no longer be with you but will leave you to go and enjoy some good fortunes of the blessed” (Plato *Phaedo* 115d).

The cup, then, is a symbol of *eucatastrophe*, to borrow a word from J.R.R. Tolkien. The jurymen who accused and condemned him sentenced him to death by the drinking of poison. In their eyes, death was the greatest evil that could befall a mortal man. Socrates’ friends also believe that the cup, and the hemlock which it holds, would bring the death of their friend and mentor, a complete catastrophe. But for Socrates, our hero of myth, the cup holds life. The cup provides the way through which Socrates can

cross the threshold to continue his hero-journey. By emptying the cup of his mortal life, Socrates is able to fill the cup of eternal life. By draining the cup of hemlock, he is able to “keep company with Orpheus and Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer” (Plato *Apology* 41a); compare his experience of unjust conviction with that of Palamedes and Ajax; and to possess for the eternity “the opportunity to examine the man who led the great expedition against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus” (Plato *Apology* 41c). This was why he was able to take the hemlock cup “cheerfully ... without a tremor” (Plato *Phaedo* 117b). For Socrates, the cup enabled the freedom of his soul, a *eucatastrophe*, in other words, a blessing.

For Jesus, the symbolic cup is most recognizable in its presence at the Last Supper (see Figure 3). The Last Supper is recounted in a similar fashion in all three Synoptic Gospels. Mark relays the part of the story concerning the cup as follows: “And he [Jesus] took a chalice, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God”” (Mark 14:23-25). Like Socrates, Jesus too holds the cup and offers a prayer prior to initiating the drinking of its contents. However, Jesus does not drink the contents of the cup. Rather, he lets his disciples drink it in order to complete his metaphor: The cup holds Jesus, the disciples consume him, and, by so doing, are strengthened by him to carry on his work because he is now in them and has become a part of them. Further, Jesus has emptied the vessel of his body into the body of the nascent Church represented by the disciples present at the Last Supper. The actions

of Jesus have made anew the covenant between God and his people whereby Jesus is the libation being poured out as the offering on behalf of many. At this point, Jesus is now free to leave the vessel of his body and cross the threshold through crucifixion as he continues his hero-journey to attain the ultimate boon.

Jesus effectively uses the symbol of the cup again, just prior to his arrest and crucifixion. He climbed the Mount of Olives with his disciples, “And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down, and prayed, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this chalice from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours be done’” (Luke 22:41-42). Just as the chalice at the Last Supper was the cup of life, in this instance, the chalice before Jesus is the cup of death. It is the hemlock up of Socrates from which Jesus must drink and in which he sees his scourging, his being nailed to the cross, and the suffocation associated with his crucifixion. However, despite the foreknowledge of his death, the hero-Jesus freely drinks from the fateful chalice set before him, and does not resist when the soldiers, chief priests and Pharisees come to arrest him. In fact, he rebukes Peter for trying to defend him saying, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the chalice which the Father has given me?” (John 18:11).

Fearlessness in the face of death, also termed a “noble death,” is the last of the additional mythological themes shared between Jesus and Socrates which we will address.

In the Hellenistic world a new tradition began in which individuals collected accounts of the deaths of significant individuals. ... More relevant for our purposes are some of the accounts of the deaths of philosophers who perished while resisting tyrants. Two of the most famous are Zeno of Elea (*floruit* in the fifth century B.C.E.) and Anaxarchus of Abdera (*floruit* in the fourth century B.C.E)... (Sterling 2001, 385).

However, it is “the death of Socrates [that] became the lens through which the deaths of later philosophers were viewed” (Sterling 2001, 387). To help prove his point, Sterling tells us that the stories of the deaths of Zeno and Anaxarchus both contain defiant phrases reminiscent of that which Socrates utters in the *Apology*, “Be sure that if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way...” (Plato *Apology* 30c-d). Plutarch utilizes the Socratic tradition when telling the story of Cato’s death, and he even had Cato reading the *Phaedo* prior to his execution. In Tacitus’ account of Seneca’s death, Seneca bathes prior to his death, drinks hemlock, offers a libation to a god, and maintains his equanimity throughout (Sterling 2001, 389). We can gain an even better appreciation for the noble death tradition epitomized in Socrates by viewing “*The Death of Socrates*” painted by Jacques-Louis David (see Figure 2). In it we see a strong muscled Socrates, in full control of his faculties, boldly professing, his hand raised with a finger pointing upward (again acknowledging wisdom from above), while simultaneously reaching for the cup of hemlock which will drain the life from his mortal body. His disciples surround him openly grieving, expressing outrage, and, in one case, near fainting. Crito is seen grabbing the leg of Socrates showing his reluctance to let Socrates go and cross the threshold, while Plato displays an attitude of sad and contemplative resignation sitting at the foot of the bed.

How does Jesus compare to such machismo? It would indeed seem to be a great challenge as Paul notes in his letter to the Corinthians, “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly

to Gentiles” (1Corinthians 1:22-23). It was a stumbling block to the Jews because their conception of the Messiah was one who would restore worldly power and greatness to Israel as it was in the days of King David. They could not fathom a Messiah who was a convicted criminal and died a criminal’s death on a cross. As for the Gentiles (in this case, the Greeks), the folly was that they did not believe in the possibility of resurrection. However, the evangelist Luke managed to write his version of the gospel, such that Jesus would embody many of the Socratic traditions associated with a “noble death.” First, Sterling tells us, “The third evangelist consistently eliminated every hint of anxiety on the part of Jesus” (Sterling 2001, 395) which was present in Mark at the garden of Gethsemane and at the crucifixion. Thus, Luke’s Jesus maintained a calm demeanor throughout these trying ordeals. Most notably, Sterling states, when Jesus is hanging on the cross, Luke substitutes Jesus recitation of Psalm 22:2 (“My God, my God why have you forsaken me?”) for Psalm 31:6 (“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”) (Sterling 2001, 396).

Luke further associates Jesus with Socrates using elements which we have previously noted elsewhere in our discussion, namely, the divine determination of his death and his unjust condemnation and ultimate innocence. He also imparts a paradigmatic quality to his death. With regards to Jesus’ death serving as a paradigm, Sterling describes three occasions found in the Acts of the Apostles, also written by Luke, that are modeled after the Socratic tradition: the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6:11-14); the defiance before the Sanhedrin where Peter proclaims “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), compared to Socrates’ statement, “I will obey the god rather than you”

(Plato *Apology* 29d); and shortly after Paul's arrival to Athens when he is brought before the Areopagus for preaching "of foreign divinities" (Acts 17:18-19) compared with Socrates' charge of "not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other new spiritual things" (Plato *Apology* 24b).

Sterling's argument for the Lucan revisions made to the story of Jesus as presented by Mark serve to solidify our own argument, as well as that of Campbell, that myths become fused over time, that they use common elements in their telling, and that it is through this fusion and use of coincident symbols that the stories are successfully passed down to future generations. While we may be assured that the stories will survive as a result of this practice, what about the messages contained in them? Can they still be intelligibly communicated?

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme
of things not found within recorded time.

...

They have seen Death and ultimate defeat,
and yet they would not in despair retreat,
but oft to victory have tuned the lyre
and kindled hearts with legendary fire...

—J.R.R. Tolkien, from *Mythopoeia*

In Chapter 4 we discussed the additional mythological symbols used to aid in communicating the stories of Jesus and Socrates. The successful use of symbology is evident by the longevity and continual perpetuation of the myths surrounding both men. But, we closed the chapter asking if their messages have been transmitted with equal success? Can the hard-won boons of Socrates and Jesus be equally and effectively communicated to future generations or are they experiential only? Is that why Jesus and Socrates never wrote down any of their teachings?

We can be sure that both Socrates and Jesus wanted their teachings to be communicated to others. At the end of the *Apology*, Socrates with calm acceptance tells the “gentlemen of the jury” who have just sentenced him to death,

when my sons grow up, avenge yourselves by causing them the kind of grief that I caused you, if you think they care for money or anything else more than they care for virtue, or if they think they are somebody when they are nobody. Reproach them as I reproach you, that they do not care for the right things and think they are worthy when they are not worthy of anything.” (Plato *Apology* 41e-42a).

Clearly, then, Socrates wanted his messages to be handed down to his sons at a minimum. However, he also prophesies that after his death there will be others, presumably, his students and disciples, who will take up the reins and continue his work where he left off. “Now I want to prophesy to those who convicted me ... There will be more people to test you, whom I now held back, but you did not notice it. They will be more difficult to deal with as they will be younger than you and you will resent them more” (Plato *Apology* 39c-d). Jesus’ desire to have his message communicated took the form of a direct order which he gave to his disciples after his resurrection: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

But knowing the intent of your mentor and executing it can be two different things. Alas, we cannot receive their knowledge and power through an osmotic transfer such as that with which Socrates chides Agathon, “How wonderful it would be, dear Agathon, if the foolish were filled with wisdom simply by touching the wise” (Plato *Symposium* 175d), or that which flows from the garments of Jesus successfully curing the hemorrhaging woman who merely touched them in Mark 5:28. However, as we noted in Chapter 4, the transmission of the stories of Socrates and Jesus was faithfully executed by their followers. Our concern lies in the transmission of their messages, the lesser boons of egalitarianism, gender equality, knowing yourself, nonviolence and civil disobedience that we described in Chapter 3, which may have become muddled if those who are hearing or reading the stories do so in ignorance. The problem of a mixed or unclear message was one that Leo Strauss specifically addressed in *Persecution and the Art of*

Writing, although he proposed that it was a deliberate intent upon the part of philosophers to write exoterically for the masses and esoterically for an eclectic and erudite few.

Campbell, too, comments on the problem of transmission: "... the Bible bears a message of its own that may not always be the one verbalized in the discourse of the text. For this book is a carrier of many symbols borrowed from the deep past, which is of many tongues" (Campbell 1976, 3:110).

Part of the solution to the problem of message transmission involves a contextual reading of the works handed down from the disciples of Jesus and Socrates. However, this task is not one to be taken lightly, and involves great preparation on the part of the reader who has been transformed into a seeker. The seeker must be an avid reader willing to digest the history of the time in which our heroes lived, the great literary works of those eras, as well as the history and works prior to those time periods. By doing so, the reward received will be great because the messages gleaned and understood from the stories of these men will be transformed.

For example, we are told that Jesus performed many miracles during his public ministry. But, as we've alluded to previously, what if some of his miracles were metaphors? It is not my intent to challenge the divinity of Christ. However, I will propose that we view one of his miracles in a different light, namely, that of healing the Gerasene demoniac (see Luke 8:26-39). Luke tells us that Jesus arrived at the country of Gerasene and found a man possessed by demons who lived "among the tombs" (Luke 8:27). Jesus commanded the demon to reveal his name to which the man responded "'Legion'; for many demons had entered him" (Luke 8:30). Jesus, subsequently,

commanded the demons to leave the man which they did by entering into a large herd of swine that then plunged themselves into a lake and were drowned. The Gerasenes of the surrounding countryside became fearful of Jesus and asked him to leave their city.

On the surface, Jesus performed a miracle, a testament to his authority and command of that which is of this world as well as that of the spiritual realm (i.e. the master of two worlds as the archetypal hero). But, if we read this in the context of those living in the first century A.D., upon seeing the word *Legion*, we would instantly comprehend the “reference to the Roman troops who occupied northern Palestine and kept the people in misery and under control” (Dear 1994). We could then make the connection that the man possessed by demons represented the Palestinians being dominated by the Romans. It would then follow that the swineherd represents the profits of war received by those in power who benefited from the Roman presence and occupation of Palestine. The destruction of the swine conveys the high price that is to be paid, if the Palestinians take a stand against their occupiers. And, finally, the fact that the Gerasenes expelled Jesus from their town tells us that they are unwilling to change the *status quo* (in this case, an ancient version of the military-industrial complex). Therefore, because they are not ready to engage in acts of civil disobedience or to relinquish the wealth provided by their military economy, they are instead relegated to live possessed (occupied) among the tombs (a fettered existence).

Hence, we, as seekers, must be willing to put forth great efforts in order to understand these stories. We must also be willing to look beyond the literal or concrete interpretations of what is written in them. As Campbell shares with us,

it must be conceded, as a basic principle of our natural history of the gods and heroes, that whenever a myth has been taken literally its sense has been perverted; but also, reciprocally, that whenever it has been dismissed as a mere priestly fraud or a sign of inferior intelligence, truth has slipped out the other door.” (Campbell 1959, 252)

Therefore, we must not only interpret these stories with our heads (i.e. by learning history), but we must also experience them with our hearts. The experiential piece of our quest is similar to when someone is attempting to explain a humorous story to you, but you are unable to comprehend what was so humorous about it. Finally, your frustrated friend ceases trying to explain it, and says, “I guess you just had to be there.” Maybe this is why Socrates and Jesus never reduced any of their teachings to papyrus and favored transmission of those messages via the oral tradition. They wanted us to “be there” and experience it firsthand. This is exactly what, I believe, Plato acknowledges in his *Seventh Letter*:

There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself. (Plato *Letter VII* 341c-d)

John the Evangelist concurs with Plato, as he states in his Second Letter, “Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12).

Midway between the head and the heart, between intellect and experience, is art. Art expressed in the form of myth. Recall in Chapter 4 that C.S. Lewis describes myth as the isthmus connecting the peninsula of thought to the continent of reality. He continues his explanation by stating that when we are enjoying a great myth, we are “not knowing;

but tasting; but what you were tasting turns out to be a universal principle” (Lewis 1970, 66). The universal principle is apparent not only in the archetypal hero’s journey and attainment of the ultimate boon described in Chapter 2, but is also present among the lesser boons delineated in Chapter 3. Perhaps now we can more fully understand and appreciate how these boons (i.e. the gifts from Socrates and Jesus) have been so successfully bestowed upon us by our heroes and handed down by their disciples and their disciples’ disciples for generations.

Finally, Lewis explains, “What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is), and therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths in the abstract level.” (Lewis 1970, 66)[emphasis in original]. For me, a myth’s potential to father a myriad of truths is proof positive of the syncretic nature of the hero myth. This syncretism occurs in two ways. The first is in the transmission of the story. We may recall Luke’s editing of the story of Jesus such that it better fit the paradigm of the Greek and Roman “noble death” tradition, as discussed in Chapter 4. We should also make note of the words of Paul preaching to the Corinthians, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1Corinthians 9:22-23). The second occurrence of syncretism in myth occurs in the message being transmitted through the myth itself. As Paul says, he’s doing what he does to share the blessings of the gospel (i.e. the messages contained therein).

As an example of this second type of syncretism, let’s review the close parallels that exist between Jesus’ curing of the blind man in Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) and

Socrates' allegory of the cave (Plato *Republic* 514a-517d). When arriving in Bethsaida, Jesus is presented with a blind man. First, he leads the man out of the village, and then lays hands on him. After the laying on of hands, the man can see people looking like trees. Jesus lays hands on him again and his sight is totally restored. Notably, after the miracle is complete, Jesus instructs the man to go home, and not to go back into the village. In Socrates' allegory of the cave, if the underground prisoners were to be freed, they would ascend the path leading out of the cave looking towards the light. At first, they would be unable to see anything, but, then, as their eyes adjusted to the light, they would see shapes, and finally the things themselves. Once they experienced the sight of the sun and other things in life as they truly are, they would be unwilling to return to life in the cave. The parallels in these two stories are obvious in light of our previous discussions: the village and the cave represent the current state of mankind which is one of ignorance; the individuals themselves are blind or only see shadows on a wall; the Good News preached by Jesus or the philosophy of Socrates will help one to see; this involves a transfer of power and knowledge represented by the laying on of hands and the ascension out of the cave; enlightenment takes time and continued effort such that Jesus must lay hands on the man twice and sometimes people must be dragged up the path into the sunlight; eventually they see the truth as the fuzzy shapes gain definition and clarity; and after seeing or experiencing the truth, there is no way that one can go back to the village or the cave and revert to a state of ignorance.

However, this syncretism is not limited only to the stories and messages of our archetypal heroes. Now that the scales have been lifted from our own eyes, we too are

charged not to descend back into the cave. As lovers of wisdom, we can infuse new life into the pages and the paintings of the past, the present, and the future. We can appropriately appreciate and be desirous of sharing the transformation that occurred in the story of Gyges originally told by Herodotus in his *Histories* (see 1.8-1.15), mythologized by Plato in his *Republic* (see 359c-360d), and memorialized for the current generation by Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*. We can treat Dante's *Inferno* as a pedagogical tool equal to that of Socrates' journey of the soul in *Phaedo* while simultaneously condemning the hypocrisy of those in power, extolling the attributes of dedicating our lives to the good, and paying tribute to the common source of both stories in Homer's *Odyssey*. We can marvel and revel in the thought that Rousseau, whose own thoughts inspired the French Revolution, may himself have been inspired by the chained ignorants imprisoned in Socrates' cave when penning the opening line of *The Social Contract*, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau 2002, 156). And, by recognizing the parallel present in Nietzsche's derision of Socrates ("Plato in front Plato behind and in the middle Chimera" (Nietzsche 1907, 111)) with the crucifixion of Jesus between two criminals "one on the right and one on the left" (Luke 23:33), we are once again driven to a deeper contemplation of these two men — forever seeking the thousand faces of our hero.

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APPENDIX

THE adventure can be summarized in the following diagram:



Figure 1. The hero cycle by Joseph Campbell.



Figure 2. "The Death of Socrates" by Jacques-Louis David, 1787.



Figure 3. “The Last Supper” by Philippe de Champaigne, 1648.